# BRAZILIAN FACTORY WOMEN, THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR AND WORKING CLASS POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF CHEMICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL FACTORY WORKERS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTERS	
1 WOMEN AND WORKI	NG-CLASS POLITICAL ACTION
Distinctive Brazilian Eco of Manufacturing in the Research Setting	1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1
MOVEMENT IN BRAZ  Introduction Labor History and the Ri The Institutionalization o Political and Economic E President Sarney's Econo Response to the Growin The New Brazilian Const President Collor's Econo	MOCRATIC PROCESSES AND THE WOMEN'S IL
AND PHARMACEUTIC Introduction Brazilian Women in Indu Pharmaceutical Worker Basic Questions Address Wage Differentials Betwe Chemicals and Pharmace	OMIC INEQUALITY IN BRAZILIAN CHEMICAL CAL FACTORIES  81 stry: The Case of Chemical and 82 ed and Data Sources. 87 een Men and Women Industrial Workers in reuticals. 88 omen Better Than Nationally 95

	Age, Education and Maritais Status in the Survey Sample of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers Gender Comparisons in Job Stability.  Attitudes of Factory Women and Men Toward Their Wage Levels, Opinions of Women Working, Daily Work Hours for Men and Women.  The Double Day and the Rising Cost of Living The Proportion of Family Income Represented by Factory Women's "Sit-in" For Overtime Pay The Rising Cost of Living in São Paulo and the Minimum Wage Decrees Conclusions.	110 115 120 123
4	A SEPARATION OF POLITICAL SPHERES RELATED TO THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR: BRAZILIAN FACTORY WOMEN'S VIEWS OF WORKING CLASS POLITICS	
	Introduction. Sociolinguistic Methods	141147151163170172
5	NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT BRAZILIAN FACTORY WOMEN, THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR AND WORKING CLASS POLITICS  Findings from Phase 1  Findings from Phase 2  Conclusions: Women's Social Constructions of Their Work and Political Roles.	194
REF	FERENCES	199
APF	PENDIX QUESTIONNAIRES USED FOR SURVEY INTERVIEWS	209
DIO	CDADUICAL SVETCU	214

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#### BRAZILIAN FACTORY WOMEN, THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR AND WORKING CLASS POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF CHEMICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL WORKERS

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This dissertation was designed to explore the relationship between gender and social class in generating collective political action among factory women in São Paulo, Brazil. The work is based on data gathered in 1983 and 1984 from women and men in an industrial sector which includes a substantial number of women workers--the chemical and pharmaceutical industry. This case study of chemical and pharmaceutical workers examines how women are incorporated into this sector of industry in the developing country of Brazil. My findings confirm other research which suggests that patriarchal relations follow women out of the home into the workplace. In the workplace, women are confined to low wage, unskilled and unstable jobs. Married women are discriminated against in hiring practices and a full family wage is paid only to men.

Traditional Marxist views of "the woman question" suggest that a massive entry of women into the urban labor force would unite the working class. Sexual equality in the workplace was supposed to occur naturally as men and women developed political consciousness as workers. My conclusions challenge traditional

Marxist views of "the woman question" by revealing that these women see themselves as a subordinate group within the "subordinate" working class. Because their daily living and working experiences differ from those of their working class male peers, these women organize their collective political action differently. They organize politically to meet their needs both as members of the subordinate class and as women with subordinate social positions within this class.

This study assesses the ability of various working class movements to respond to the social and political needs expressed by women as workers and key economic members of working class households. The survey and in-depth fieldwork suggest that during the research period, women organized political action around health and household consumption issues both in the neighborhood associations and in the factories. There was resistance from male union leaders to formulate action addressing health issues or gender-based wage inequalities and factory women organized autonomously to overcome this resistance.

Neighborhood-based political organizations incorporated more women as leaders than did the labor unions. In fact, a sexual division of labor appears to exist in Brazilian working class political movements which encourages predominantly male participation in the union movement and predominantly female participation in community associations. Pressuring government officials to meet the demands of the working class for better living conditions is a new sphere of women's political responsibility. Although women are not absent from the union movement and do hold a few positions of leadership, the responsibility for pressuring the government to respond to the wage demands of the working class remains "men's work."

## CHAPTER 1 WOMEN AND WORKING-CLASS POLITICAL ACTION

#### Introduction

This dissertation explores the relationship between gender and class in shaping collective political action among factory women in São Paulo, Brazil. I designed the field study to investigate two basic hypotheses. First, since Latin American women have been entering into the labor force in greater numbers during the 1970s and 1980s, I predicted that they would also be entering into labor organizations in greater numbers. Brazilian labor unions have traditionally been male-dominated institutions (as in the U.S. case). A new "women's presence" both in the labor force and in labor politics in Brazil could produce some rapid restructuring and the incorporation of new women's demands into union agendas (again a historical parallel to the U.S. labor unions of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s). Regardless of whether or not working women achieved full union participation as elected leaders themselves, when there has been a strong presence of working women in industry women's demands have made their way into union agendas due to the "political capital" which working women represent (Kessler-Harris 1982; Alvarez 1989). Second, I predicted that women-led community organizations might be stimulated to formulate specific demands focusing on women given the large numbers of politically active feminist organizations present in the highly urbanized Brazilian industrial region centered around São Paulo during the period from 1975 to 1980.

In order to investigate these two hypotheses, I selected a group of factory women and a politically active working class neighborhood in São Paulo for intensive study. In the first phase of the field research, I conducted a survey of women and men in an industrial sector which includes a large number of women workers—the chemical and pharmaceutical industry. In the second phase of the project, I gathered participant-observation data in a working class community in Diadema, a satellite city of São Paulo known for both its concentration of factory workers and for its political activism. This dissertation project analyzes both union activity and community-based political activity from a feminist perspective. That is, I will analyze both of these realms of political activity with respect to their openness or, conversely, their restrictiveness toward women participants.

The orthodox Marxist position of "the woman question" is that women can reduce their economic dependence on men by entering into paid employment.

My conclusions based on the research presented in this dissertation challenge traditional Marxist views of "the woman question" by suggesting that these working class women studied in São Paulo, Brazil, see themselves as a subordinate group within the (subordinate) working class. Sustained participation in wage labor did not lead to a fundamental reconstruction of their identities as production workers among the women I studied. A homogeneous working class of men and women "working side by side" has not emerged. Instead segregated realities persist among factory workers and among men and women in working class neighborhoods and favelas. Because their daily living and working experiences differ from those of their working class male peers, these women organize their collective political action differently to meet their needs both as members of the subordinate class and as women with subordinated positions within this class.

This chapter includes a brief summary of some of the distinct features of the Brazilian economy, a description of the research setting, explanation of my research methods and a review of related research literature. This research is designed to explore factory women's political consciousness by examining their participation in social movements and the literature reviewed falls into two basic categories: research on the relationship between industrialization and women's political participation and studies concerning women's participation in Latin American social movements.

The topics addressed in the first research review section on industrialization and women's political consciousness include the sexual division of labor as it relates to women and the industrialization process, the traditional Marxist treatment of "the woman question," some fundamental contrasts between feminist and Marxist approaches to the study of women in paid work, the role of social experiences in revealing women's oppression, and "gendered" work experiences in Brazilian industry.

The second part of the literature review concerning Latin American women's participation in social movements describes early examples of political activism by women factory workers, the emergence of working class community political organization in Brazil, the Brazilian cost of living movement, and finally "liberation theology" and working class women's participation in community-based political activity.

The city of São Paulo was the site of the research project. São Paulo, Brazil, is a heavily industrialized megapolis in a Third World country. Brazil has several economic characteristics which make it unique as a Third World country. São Paulo also is unique within the nation of Brazil. This research setting can be more fully understood if I describe some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Brazilian economy. The following section will briefly describe the influence of Brazil's international debt on development strategies, the current significance of

manufacturing for the Brazilian economy, and the continuing social problem represented by stark income inequalities in Brazil.

## <u>Distinctive Brazilian Economic Characteristics: The Debt and the Role of Manufacturing in the Brazilian Economy</u>

#### Brazil's International Debt

One of the most commonly known characteristics of Brazil is its outstanding international debt. Brazil currently has one of the largest international debts in the world and its debt is second to none in the Third World. At the time of the initiation of my fieldwork (December 1982), Brazil's external debt was at 84 billion dollars (Baer 1983:164). A less known fact is that Brazil has one of the most developed industrial sectors in Latin America. In spite of continuing success in the expansion of industry in the country however, Brazil is not perceived as moving closer to overcoming its economic dependency in relation to the core capitalist countries. A small portion of this economic dependency can be explored by examining the role of the international debt negotiations in the design of national economic development strategies.

The foreign debt is not a new problem in Brazil. The main expense reported by the Ministry of Finance in 1831 was payment on debt services and mainly on the foreign debt (Maia Gomes 1986:21). The Brazilian foreign debt escalated in the 1980s mainly because Brazilian economy policy makers set high domestic interest rates in order to induce state and private enterprises to borrow abroad (Baer 1983:133). Brazil borrowed close to US\$ 16 billion in 1981 alone.

Baer (1983:165) breaks down Brazil's international debt as it stood in the 1980s as follows: 89.1% is owed to private banks; 3.3% to the U.S. government; another 3.7% to the World Bank and the remaining 3.9% of the foreign debt is spread out to the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Finance

Corporation, the Japan Export-Import Bank and the German Government Development Bank.

The Brazilian foreign debt deficit was tolerated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, a major banking coalition which specializes in international development loans) and several private foreign banks which lent money to Brazil until 1982 when Mexico refused to continue repayment. Since that time foreign bankers have been reluctant to keep lending to developing nations such as Brazil. Negotiation with the IMF is critical for Brazil because since 1982 commercial banks look to the IMF for signals on further lending (Skidmore 1985:237). In 1982, not only Brazil and Mexico, but also Argentina entered into payments crises with their external loans.

Brazilian negotiations with the IMF in January 1983 were intense. To receive continued installments of its IMF loan, Brazil had to be placed on a schedule to reach the economic goals specified by the IMF team of economic analysts. These goals constituted an orthodox "austerity program:" "reduce the rate of growth of the money supply, tighten credit, reduce the public sector deficit, devalue faster, eliminate subsidies, and restrict wage increases" (Skidmore 1988:237).

The austerity measures had great impact on the Brazilian economy during the 1980s. By December of 1983, employment in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro had fallen by 15% in relation to August 1978 averages. By February 1984, industrial production dropped 14% below the annual average for 1980. Industrial employment dipped even more—down by 26% in greater São Paulo and down by 30% in greater Rio. Real wages fell sharply in 1983 and 1984. Those earning the minimum wage in Rio and São Paulo suffered most; the lower paid workers were laid off first (Skidmore 1988:238).

Unemployment and inflation problems in Brazil during the period from 1985 through 1990 will be described in more detail in the next chapter. However, it is noteworthy that since 1987 Brazil has maintained a moratorium on its interest payments on the international debt (*Veja* 1987; Brooke, New York Times, April 10, 1990). Perhaps this moratorium is a *de facto* admission that the original orthodox austerity measures became impractical in contemporary Brazil.

## The Role of Manufacturing in Brazilian Economic Development

Brazil has a strong industrial economy with more than half of its exports being manufactured goods. In 1985, Brazil had an estimated Gross Domestic Product of \$227 billion (Andrade 1985). It is ranked as the eighth largest economy worldwide in terms of gross domestic product (Bresser Pereira 1984:211).

The economic policies devised by the post-1964 military regime and successive strategies devised by the post-1985 civilian administrations have encouraged foreign investment in Brazilian industry. The heaviest investment of foreign capital (i.e. the strongest presence of multinationals) in Brazil is now in chemicals, automotive industry, machinery, metals, electronics and pharmaceuticals. The chemical and pharmaceutical sector which I chose for study is one in which foreign investment is very heavy. Most of the men and women whom I interviewed from chemical and pharmaceutical factories were employed by multinationals.

Manufacturing is the single most important economic sector in the Brazilian economy today. In 1980 the total number of people employed in manufacturing was estimated to be 6.75 million or 15% of the total active labor force of 43.8 million (Andrade 1985; Bruschini 1989). In 1985, the three most important economic sectors in Brazil were manufacturing (which contributed more than 30% of the

Gross Domestic Product, GDP), commerce and finance (20% of the GDP), and agricultural production (11% of the GDP) (Andrade 1985).

Most manufacturing firms in Brazil are concentrated in the industrial triangle in the south-central region of the country. This industrial triangle is the area between the three cities of Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. Most manufacturing establishments in this region are small with fewer than 100 employees (Andrade 1985; Bruschini 1989). These small firms employ an estimated 50% of the industrial labor force. Medium-size firms employ 15% of the industrial labor force. Large firms with 250 or more workers employ about 35% of the industrial labor force (Andrade 1985).

In spite of the fact that small industrial establishments hire more people, the large industrial establishments are more significant in the economic output of Brazil. Since the debt crisis began in the 1970s, export growth has been encouraged by the government because increasing exports is important in generating the foreign exchange needed to service the growing foreign debt (Bresser Pereira 1984; Andrade 1985). Industrial exports represented 72.3% of the total exports in 1982 (Andrade 1985). The most important export industries in Brazil are in food, beverages and tobacco (the largest sector), manufactured metal (the second largest) and chemicals (the third largest). My field study included intensive study of this third largest sector of export industry—chemical and pharmaceutical production.

## Research Setting

## The City of São Paulo

São Paulo became the fastest growing city in the world in the 1950s and is now the largest city in South America. In the 1980 census the population of Greater São Paulo was recorded as more than 12 million. Most of the population growth has been in the periphery of the city (Sader, 1988:67) where new industry is located and where the bulk of the working class now reside. São Paulo has become the economic center and industrial heart of Brazil (São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission 1978:19).

I conducted a large part of my research at the headquarters for the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union which is located in a central area of the city called *Liberdade*, part of the "Chinatown" of São Paulo. Chemical and pharmaceutical factories are spread throughout the city, but most of the industrial workers live in the periphery.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Greater São Paulo became the center of a new combative labor movement associated with the metalworkers of the automobile industry. This political activism began in the new industrial periphery of the city called the "ABC region," referring to the satellite cities of Santo Andre, São Bernardo do Campo, and São Caetano. Diadema, the location of the neighborhood association chosen for study, is a fourth satellite city in the Greater metropolitan region sometimes referred to as the "D" in the "ABCD region" of São Paulo. The map in Figure 1-1 shows the ABC region and Diadema in relation to the city of São Paulo.

As has been mentioned, São Paulo holds a privileged position in relation to the rest of Brazil. It is the center of economic activity in the richest state in the country. A large proportion of Brazil's domestic product is concentrated in the state of São Paulo of which the city of São Paulo is the Capital. Massive investments have continued to be channelled into the state of São Paulo during the 1970s and 1980s.

The per capita income provided by manufacturing from the state of São Paulo was estimated to be more than five times greater than in other parts of the country by the São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission (1978). São Paulo is the

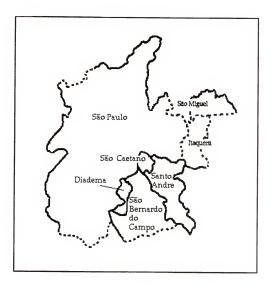


Figure 1-1. Greater São Paulo Showing Diadema and the "ABC Region" Known for Union Activism

center of manufacturing, the sector of economic activity which has expanded the fastest in the recent development of the Brazilian economy. According to the 1978 São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission estimates, 40% of the state income came from manufacturing and 12% from agriculture. As a point of comparison, in other states in the country, manufacturing averages only about 17% of the total state production and agriculture averages 27% (São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission 1978:19).

Even as early as 1948, São Paulo dominated in the process of capital accumulation (the process of growth in which capital expands by assimilating its own product--profit). In 1948, São Paulo was responsible for 45.9% of all capital issues in Brazil (as reported by the Getulio Vargas Foundation). After a fall during the first half of the 1960s, São Paulo again reached over a 44% share of all capital issues in the country (São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission 1978:19).

In summary, income is highly concentrated regionally in Brazil and the most substantial proportion of resources produced in Brazil end up in São Paulo. Since São Paulo brings together the most advanced sectors of industrial and agricultural production, the productivity of its companies is greater and it gains an advantage in trade terms with other regions in Brazil. There is a greater contrast between the level of economic development of the city of São Paulo and the other parts of the state of São Paulo.

Although from some standpoints, São Paulo is highly developed economically, if the development of the city is viewed from the perspective of the living conditions of its inhabitants, there is an increasing inequality. There is great wealth evident in the houses of the "garden" areas of the city, but the working class districts lack basic urban services such as public transportation, a clean water supply, drains and adequate housing.

There is a growth in the consumption of luxury items among a small segment of the population while the real value of the minimum wage continues to fall (São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission 1978). In 1980, an estimated 11% of the economically active population in Greater São Paulo had an average monthly income below the legal minimum salary (Sader 1988:82). Fifty-two percent of the population of the Capital and 73% of the other municipalities in the region suffered from incipient malnutrition (São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission 1978:48). According to housing data from 1978 for the city of São Paulo, 130,000 people lived in favelas, 615,000 in slums and 1.8 million in roughly built houses on the periphery (São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission 1978:40).

#### Methods

## Choosing a Group of Factory Women for Study

In a preliminary visit to São Paulo, a city in which I had previous fieldwork experience, I found that there were a number of active women's groups in the labor movement. Some women-only slates of union candidates had even been constituted. My initial plan was to study these groups and the experiences of these slates of candidates. This visit took place in the summer of 1981. By January of 1983, when I returned to the field, these women's groups promoting women-only union slates had disappeared.

After making new contact with the active feminist groups in early 1983, I found that there had been a tremendous decrease in the number of women participating in conferences organized specifically around women's issues in São Paulo between 1980 and 1983. Alvarez (1989) has also addressed this general decline in the number of participants in the women's movment during this period

(See Chapter 2). In 1980 there were 5000 participants in a city-wide women's conference held to discuss issues such as the need for public nurseries, women's health issues and violence against women. By 1983 the conference had been discontinued.

International Women's Day (initiated by the UN in 1975) is one women's conference which continues to be held annually. I was finally able to contact some of the existing groups of feminist activists in March 1983 after well-attended International Women's Day activities in São Paulo. I identified several women's groups which had contact with working class women. These groups were active in the labor movement, in literacy classes and other education programs at a Center for Women in a peripheral district of the city, and in centers for battered women (SOS Mulher). During these initial months of fieldwork, I also became aware that many women were organizing in broader interclass social movements including the Campaign for Direct Election of the President, protests against the rising cost of living and protests aimed at the new package of austerity measures associated with Brazil's International Monetary Fund negotiations.

After several months of field observation, I selected the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union of São Paulo to study. This union was one of the three so-called "opposition labor unions" in the area. The other two unions which were militant in their opposition to current government policies were the bank workers of São Paulo and the metalworkers of São Bernardo. The Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union was unique in that six of the twenty-four union directors were women, representing the largest concentration of women in any officially recognized union directorship. Since I wanted to study women's participation in organized labor, I chose not to study the bank workers and metalworkers which were economic groups composed largely of male workers. An

estimated 25% of the chemical and pharmaceutical industrial sector were women workers (DIEESE 1983 unpublished data, see Chapter 3).

Gathering of primary data. The first part of the study concentrated on activities at the union headquarters. I conducted formal and informal interviews with men and women at the headquarters. I accompanied women union leaders to small union meetings in and near various chemical and pharmaceutical factories.

The second part of my study concentrated on a working class bairro (neighborhood) in Diadema. I selected this satellite city of São Paulo because Diadema is considered by union leaders and researchers concerned with the working class to be representative of working class living conditions. Diadema borders on another working class satellite city which has been intensely active in union and Worker's Party politics, São Bernardo do Campo. A noted union leader ("Lula") emerged from the Metalworkers Union of São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema. He was only narrowly defeated in the presidential elections of 1989 in Brazil.

I chose to study both bairo (neighborhood) organizing and union organizing for three reasons: 1) I wanted to compare more formal political structures such as the union and political parties to less formally organized social movements; 2) I wanted to compare women-dominated and male-dominated political organizations; and 3) I wanted to compare factory women with other working class women who did not work outside the home full-time in order to see which group was more active politically.

Secondary data used. Two kinds of secondary data were obtained at the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union headquarters: 1) unpublished data on men and women factory workers' wages from the Inter-union Department of Social and Economic Statistics (DIEESE) office at the union headquarters and

2) summary slips for dismissals over a two-week period in March, 1984, registered at the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Factory Workers' Union. These large data sets allow analysis of wage inequalities connected with gender and job stability in this sector of industry in São Paulo.

Analysis of wage inequalities is essential to understanding the economic roots of women's subordination. Job stability is also an issue of concern for men and women who may wish to promote their interests through union activism. For women, however, job stability has further political implications. Women's exclusion from union activities has traditionally been rationalized as due to their alleged instability in the work force (Kessler-Harris 1982; Margolis 1984). Chapter 3 presents some of my analyses of wage inequalities and job stability as they relate to gender.

## Questionnaire Design

I did participant-observation in small factory meetings and in the larger meetings held at the union headquarters before formulating the questionnaire which I used to interview people from the chemical and pharmaceutical factories. The general questionnaire survey was designed to obtain information about the attitudes and demographic profile of this labor group as a whole.

The survey sample consisted of interviews with 100 employees of chemical and pharmaceutical factories in São Paulo. I carried out these interviews at the union headquarters in the medical section while people waited to see the doctor and the dentist. On the days designated for medical visits, I interviewed the first 50 men and 50 women who came in until I had 100 total interviews.

I preferred to contact people in this way for the general survey rather than interviewing them at factory gates or at union meetings for two primary reasons. First, this sampling technique allows people to be interviewed who are not necessarily active in the union. Anyone who works in chemicals or pharmaceuticals and wants free medical or dental care comes to the union headquarters on the designated medical service days. Verena Stolcke (1988) found that for the women coffee workers in São Paulo whom she interviewed, the union was considered mainly as a place to go for medical and dental services. My interviews confirmed that in most of the cases the factory workers came to the union headquarters only when they needed to see the doctor.

Second, if I had interviewed workers at factory gates I could have been perceived as connected with the union. Many men and women fear losing their jobs if they are seen talking to union organizers and as a consequence, any set of interviews taken at the factory gates would be biased in favor of more active or less fearful union members. Workers interviewed in the medical section of the union headquarters would be safely out of the view of their employers. Consequently, in the medical services section of the union headquarters I could interview a whole range of factory workers--from the least politically active to the most politically active. Anyone who got a tooth-ache, for example, might show up there to get free dental care whether he or she were an activist or politically "neutral."

The survey questionnaire was drafted and revised based on detailed discussions with three of the six women union directors and an activist pharmaceutical worker who had experience with labor surveys conducted by DIEESE (the Inter-union Department of Social and Economic Statistics). The questions were worded to approximate the typical factory workers' ways of speaking and formal sounding anthropological or sociological terms were eliminated in so far as possible. Questions were added based on the interests of organizers from the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union. (The preliminary English version and the two Portuguese versions of the questionnaire are shown in the appendix.)

Because the survey was designed as a shared project between the researcher and the union, the preliminary results were presented to the Women's Commission in 1984 before I left São Paulo.

Another group of special interviews was conducted with activists to explore their attitudes and social backgrounds. These taped interviews were more individualized and were designed to explore the personal political development of the activists and the development of groups in which they participated. Some interviews were conducted in group settings, but more often they were done individually. While the site of the interviews with the general sample was always the medical section of the union headquarters, the activists' interviews were at varied sites. Some were done in the homes of individuals and some at community headquarters for the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* or Workers' Party (PT) in Diadema. The results of these interviews are presented in Chapter Four.

### Choosing a Neighborhood Association

To gain some information which would allow me to contrast the attitudes and political participation of factory women with women who do not work outside the home, a neighborhood association was chosen for study. During the first phase of the research, while concentrating on factory women and union activities, I visited several of the factory workers in their neighborhoods of residence and I met a variety of community organizers. I interviewed women who did not work outside the home and were active leaders in working class community organizations such as favela (shantytown) commissions and neighborhood associations.

I looked for a community-based organization to study intensively in Diadema because Diadema had the following characteristics: It was an industrial working class dormitory area located adjacent to São Bernardo do Campo, one of the satellite cities around São Paulo known for its union activism. The mayor of Diadema was responsive to *favela* dwellers and was elected by a government opposition party, the PT. There was also a linkage between the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union and Diadema; two of the women union leaders and the president of that union came from Diadema.

The particular community in the Diadema region which I chose for study was Jardim das Naçoes. Women were politically active in the three basic kinds of community organizations in that community--the Neighborhood Friends' Society, the church-based association (ecclesial base community), and in the local community headquarters (núcleo) of the PT. The neighborhood association in Jardim das Naçoes which I studied was simply called the Sociedade Amigos de Bairro (Neighborhood Friends' Society). The decisive factors in choosing this particular neighborhood association were its women-only slate of officers and its plan for political organizing which extended beyond immediate demands for neighborhood utilities services to long-range politicization of the working class.

Diadema is about 40% favelas. Jardim das Naçoes had been a favela in the past and currently bordered on these types of lower working class communities. The residents of Jardim das Naçoes had succeeded over the past three years in getting one major street paved and were in the process of constructing a community recreation center. I was able to get an introduction into the community and to the Neighborhood Friends' Society leadership from a member of the community who had participated in their union and neighborhood political activities since 1978 when the PT was founded in Diadema. The confidence which these women community leaders had in him was an important foundation for gaining access to the group. Nevertheless, I was questioned extensively both by these community activists and by union organizers as to the source of my interest in political activity. Due to

the political sensitivity of my subject matter, I would estimate that it took at least eight months to establish rapport in the field.

### Literature Review: Industrialization and Women's Consciousness

Before going on to describe the first major area of research literature which relates to this dissertation project, I will describe the basic theoretical orientation which guided this fieldwork project. This theoretical framework has also been used by Fernandez-Kelly (1983), Deere and Leal (1985), Nash and Fernandez-Kelly (1983) and Beneria and Roldán (1986) in other studies of Latin American women. Using this framework, Safa (1980, 1983, 1986, 1990a, 1990b) and Saffioti (1978. 1980) have presented descriptive overviews of the labor structures in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the United States and have discussed how these labor structures relate to the international economic system. Both Safa (1980, 1983) and Saffioti (1978, 1980) see gender, class struggle and the international division of labor as fundamental forces shaping the lives of working class women. Saffioti (1980) and Deere and Leal (1985) describe three tiers of interactions which affect the impact of proletarianization upon women: the international division of labor, the national differentiation of labor which relates to social class relations and to regional and urban/rural interdependencies, and the household division of labor by gender. Age, sex, and class hierarchies interact to create an industrial division of labor which places working class women in particular in detrimental economic positions which generally deteriorate rather than improve over their lifetimes (Higgs 1989).

Saffioti (1980) emphasizes that the participation of women in the labor force depends upon more than simply the degree of industrialization of a country. It also depends upon the national traditions, the dominant religion, the political regime, and cultural patterns related to family configurations (the nature of kinship

networks) in a given country. Also whether industrialization is planned or spontaneous, labor or capital intensive, affects the nature of women's insertion into the labor structure (Saffioti 1980).

Not only are working class women finding themselves forced by their economic circumstances to participate in occupational structures which discriminate against them, they must also maintain primary responsibility for household chores (Higgs and Lobo 1985, Humphrey 1987, French and Pedersen 1989, Stolcke 1988). The sexual division of labor in the work force, in the factories, and in the home generates long hours and poor pay for working class women (Beneria and Roldán 1986, Lobo and Higgs 1983). The present study complements the research by Saffioti (1978, 1980), Safa (1980, 1983, 1986, 1990a, 1990b), and others (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Deere and Leal 1985; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; and Beneria and Roldán 1986) by adding descriptions of working women's collective political action to their primarily economic descriptions of working class women's households.

## "The Woman Question:" The Sexual Division of Labor, Women and Industrialization

According to Dixon (1983) and Tilly and Scott (1978), since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, women have been a source of cheap labor for industrial capitalism. These writers follow the line of materialist inquiry encouraged by Engels. His basic theory regarding the impact of industrialization on women's status was originally set forth in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972).

When production moved from outside the home into the factory, the family changed from a production unit to one dependent on outside wages. By removing production from the home, industrial capitalism significantly changed the sexual division of labor to the detriment of women. Women became dependent on male

wage earners and the family lost its economic autonomy. Engels (1972) and Leacock (1972) showed how female labor--which serves to maintain human society as a whole--was transformed into a private service for the husband resulting in the exploitation of women:

The significant characteristic of monogamous marriage was its transformation of the nuclear family into the basic economic unit of society, within which a woman and her children became dependent upon an individual man. Arising in conjunction with exploitative class relations, this transformation resulted in the oppression of women which has persisted to the present day. (Leacock 1972:42)

The orthodox interpretation of "the woman question" has been developed by anthropologists to explain the social impact of the domestic/public split. As Sacks (1974: 219-221) has demonstrated, in class societies the domestic and public spheres of social life are separated, increasing productivity by mass production which requires workers to leave the domestic sphere. Because men were free from childbearing and therefore more efficient sources of this public labor, women were left to carry on domestic production alone. When domestic productive activity became dependent on male earnings from public work, domestic labor was devalued because it did not produce exchange values. This dichotomy of men's and women's work preceded capitalism, but was subsequently reinforced by the development of capitalist economic structures. This division of men's from women's work began under agrarian class societies and was maintained under capitalism. The significance of this domestic-public split has also been emphasized in cross-cultural comparisons by Rosaldo (1974), Sanday (1973) Safa (1990a, 1990b) and Reiter (1975). Beneria and Roldán (1986) have gone on to demonstrate that the publicprivate split is not a clear separation in the case of piecework done by women in their homes in Mexico.

To break down the physical isolation of women and their economic dependence on men, Marxists point out the necessity of women entering into paid employment. The orthodox Marxist position has been that by so doing, women circumvent the separation of their productive roles from their reproductive roles which has resulted from industrial capitalism. According to Marxist theory on "the woman question," women's employment will give them more economic autonomy and contribute to their development of class consciousness as workers (Hartmann 1987, Dixon 1983).

In summary, the traditional Marxist position on "the woman question" (Engels 1972, Leacock 1986, Dixon 1983) suggests the following historical scheme: Since the Industrial Revolution, women have been a source of cheap labor. In this phase of history, production moved outside the home and the family became dependent on outside wages. The sexual division of labor changed to the detriment of women as they became more dependent on male wage earners. Female labor was transformed into a private service for the husband. With the development of industrialization, the family became isolated from the central social and economic organization of society.

Safa (1983), Barrett (1988) and Dixon (1983) have summarized the impact of industrialization on women by indicating three main obstacles to women achieving autonomy and class consciousness: the segregation of women into poorly paid and unstable jobs, their double burden due to the requirements of maintaining primary responsibility for home chores in addition to those of paid work outside the home, and a gender ideology which defines women as secondary workers even when they are fully employed. As Leacock has stated, the restriction of women to low-wage jobs has forced women's labor power to be confined primarily to production in the home, where they are subjugated to men in marriage simply because they could not support themselves otherwise (1970:91-92).

Marxist discourse on "the woman question" suggests that women can only develop class consciousness and correctly identify the sources of their oppression by entering the work place. Marxists say that to reduce the isolation of women and their dependence, women need to enter paid employment. Ultimately working class women's participation in paid employment should produce autonomy and class consciousness as workers. In the next section, I will describe some feminist critiques of that position.

#### Feminism and Marxist Theoretical Approaches Contrasted

In general, Marxists stress economic participation and the work place as the site for activism. One of the central themes in feminist theory stresses redefining the division of labor within the home as equally important (Eisenstein 1983).

Marxist theory generally is concerned with collective processes; feminism has often focused on individual consciousness and personal action. The feminist practice of consciousness-raising, the process of achieving political awareness of gender discrimination was done in small groups. However, the bulk of feminist political action, often described as "making the personal political," seems to have been left for each woman to carry out individually in her own domestic arrangements. As a consequence of this more individualistic orientation, some feminist theory examines psychological processes and deals for example with the meaning of mothering, sex roles, and the impact of ideology which defines "womanhood" (Eisenstein 1983).

While traditional Marxists view women's oppression as the result of class inequalities, feminist scholars have found this view an oversimplification. Hartmann (1987), Rowbotham (1972), Beneria and Roldán (1986), Stolcke (1988), and Kergoat (1978) even oppose the class-only view saying that the oppression of women

has a dynamic of its own. That dynamic is known in feminist literature as "the patriarchy." Definitions vary, but this term refers generally to the domination of decision-making roles in social structures by men. Although patriarchal relations pre-date capitalism, patriarchy and capitalism can be analyzed as interconnected and mutually reinforcing in the structuring of labor relations and political action.

Marxist-feminists such as Leacock (1986:259) have said that the family as an economic unit is a fundamental link between capitalism and patriarchy. Leacock has pointed out that the demands of working-class women for child-care centers and decent schools, adequte housing, and for health care attack the structural basis for women's oppression, even though these demands are not solely production-related (1986:259).

Beneria and Roldán (1986: 201) suggest that "the processes of creation and recreation of class and gender take place simultaneously and can hardly be separated and relegated to two semi-autonomous systems." Their research in Mexico indicates that the household is connected with "global processes" even though the household continues to have a dynamic of its own as well. Beneria and Roldán (1986) conclude that any development policy or program for social change concerned with poverty or employment inequality cannot relegate the issue of gender inequality to a secondary place and separate it from economic class-based concerns.

Patriarchal and class relations have generated a labor structure which incorporates women and men differently. Women experience different social relations in the factory and their jobs are designated according to the cultural definition of "women's work" (Humphrey 1987).

This first summary of literature has dealt with general theoretical concerns regarding women and work and the sources of women's oppression. The upcoming section discusses the sexual division of labor in industry and how it affects women's participation in working class political action. The next studies to be reviewed will address more specific issues. How do management strategies differ for men and women workers? How do women's culturally assigned roles in child-rearing affect their participation in industrial wage labor? As the consumption interests of an urban industrial working class begin to be articulated, how do women's consumer-oriented household roles lead them to become key political actors?

## The Role of Social Experiences in Revealing Women's Oppression

Feminists generally focus on a variety of social experiences rather than simply on women's roles in production as sources of enlightenment regarding the oppression of women. Not only the work place, but also the home can be the arena for political action according to feminist "consciousness-raising." The social experiences of women in the home in their domestic arrangements paired with group "consciousness raising" activities can reveal to women their oppression. Hartmann and Markusen (1980:91-92) have stated that the purpose of women's political organization is to "provide support for all women in their home struggle and raise demands on the private and state sectors to remove their supports for patriarchy."

Luxemburg (as quoted in Bronner 1987) also emphasized the role of social experiences in generating class consciousness. Luxemburg (as quoted in Bronner 1987) suggested that the most important step for women to develop a consciousness of class oppression was the learning which could come from a special social experience, the experience of resisting as part of an organized and politically active opposition group. That is, contact with social groups which collectively analyze and react to the perceived oppression is a key experience preceding political activism. E.P. Thompson's ideas (1963) regarding the "making of the working class" are in harmony with these views:

(A particular historical class) relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context . . . class happens when some men [sic], as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared) feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men [sic] whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. (Thompson 1963: 9-10)

Classes "occur in the daily living of men and women, in the relations of production and in their experimentation with determined situations" (Thompson 1979:38-39). Rather than imposing a rigid "blueprint" defining class consciousness, Thompson says the working class is defined by its own members in their own collective actions as they live their own history.

Caldeira (1987) encourages laying aside debates about class consciousness to focus instead on women's participation in social movements and women as social actors. Her views are compatible with those of Luxemberg (1987) and Thompson (1963) and with feminists such as Hartmann and Markusen (1980) who stress personal social experience. All of these views stand in contrast to orthodox Marxist interpretations which stress the experience which comes directly from the workers' participation in production. These researchers are suggesting that not only women's participation in collective work experiences, but women's participation in the public sphere of politics can change their views of themselves in a fundamental way which leads to social change. Participation in social movements and informal political organizations could also result in the formation of a collective (working class) identity based on shared economic circumstances.

## <u>Literature Review: The Impact of the Industrial Sexual Division of Labor on</u> Women's Working Class Political Activity

### Gendered Work Experiences in Brazilian Industry

As Humphrey (1987) has indicated, Brazil is not an average or representative country with regard to Third World industrialization and the employment of women. It can, however, be used to explore many issues about the sexual division of labor in industry. Women have been incorporated into many industries in Brazil, including heavy and consumer durable sectors of industry during the phase of import substitution. There are a variety of industries in which women work in large establishments where many men are also employed. In addition, in Brazilian industry during the 1970s, substantial numbers of married women became part of the labor force. Studies of the Brazilian case can examine management strategies concerning women of different marital status and position in the household and the strategies of the women workers themselves concerning paid employment. Because the Brazilian trade union movement has been historically weak in bargaining with industrial firms, such studies reveal the structure of the sexual division of labor where the formal union movement has not significantly influenced management practices to prevent discrimination against women workers.

Humphrey (1987) has emphasized the importance of women's domestic responsibilities and the importance of the breadwinner role for men in determining their availability for industrial work. These normative constraints not only affect individuals as they seek personal employment, but they also influence managers who make hiring decisions. Managers often view women as secondary workers and consequently lay women off first or hire married women last. Managements treat men and women as two homogeneous and opposed categories, Humphrey (1987)

says, forcing people to conform to gender stereotypes. Cockburn (as quoted by Humphrey 1987:86) has described this effect by stating: "'Patriarchy' pursues women actively into the work-place." Beneria and Roldán (1986) have also described how "patriarchal relationships" in the home and in the labor force lead to a concentration of women in low-paid subcontracting (piecework) jobs.

Humphrey (1987) describes how these same "patriarchal relationships" shape

the experiences of Brazilian factory women. According to Humphrey (1987), women in factory work are treated as an inferior category of workers. Single women are treated as potential mothers who will cause problems for productivity due to the demands of child care. Men are treated as more stable, long-term employees. These expectations on the part of management are reinforced by dead-end jobs and low pay for women. Men are given better promotion prospects and better pay in view of management assumptions that they are the primary bread winners. Not only recruitment policies reflect this view of men and women, but also the "segregation and hierarchy in the everyday life of the factory" (Humphrey 1987:87).

Women are segregated into unskilled jobs and excluded from promotion ladders by job categories which are highly subjective, being based on the sex of the individual holding the job. The sex of the workers determines whether or not certain work is designated as skilled or unskilled and whether or not ladders for promotion are constructed by management. As Phillips and Taylor have described the situation, the categories used to manage labor forces are "saturated with gender."

What all of these examples illustrate is the extent to which skill has become saturated with sex. It is not that skill categories have been totally subjectified: in all cases some basis was found in the content of work to justify the distinctions between men's and women's work. But the equations - men/skilled and women/unskilled - are so powerful that the identification of a particular job with women ensured that the skill content of the work would be downgraded. It is the sex of those who do that work, rather than its content, which leads to its

identification as skilled or unskilled (1980:85). [Emphasis Phillips and Taylor's]

Women are excluded from more prestigious work and the training opportunities which would lead to it (Humphrey 1987:175). Employment policies are created by employers which are different for the male labor force than for the female labor force. Managers make decisions considering factors such as pressure by men for a family wage, men's resistance to being given equal or lower status in relation to women workers, and the pervasive devaluation of women's attributes and capabilities.

Of course, this situation is not unique to Brazilian industry. Margolis (1984) and Kessler-Harris (1982) have shown this to have been historically true in the U.S. One of the traditional arguments used to devalue women's paid work is known as the "pin money" argument. Margolis (1984:240-241) has demonstrated how this logic has been used by employers to rationalize discriminatory wages paid to women. Since women allegedly did not need their earnings to live on, they were often excluded from pay raises even in the U.S. of the 1960s and 1970s. This same argument was used to rationalize laying women off first. Such interpretations of why women work were particularly inaccurate during the 1920s and 1930s in the U.S. when studies indicated that 90% of all employed women worked because of extreme economic necessity (Margolis 1984:240). Margolis (1984:241) also cites data from 1980 in the U.S. which indicate that nearly two-thirds of the 44 million U.S. women who work for wages were the sole support of themselves and their families or were married to men whose annual income was under \$15,000.

In the U.S. during the 1920s, wage-earning women became very active in the union movement. In one noteworthy case, they accused the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1926 and 1927 of discriminating against them (Kessler-Harris 1982). The union was favoring men over women for the best-paid jobs and

demanding more wage reductions for women than men during the slow season. Women union members claimed that women were being denied access to important union posts as well. They finally demanded and received women organizers, a women's bureau, and specific attention to women's social needs (Kessler-Harris 1982:248).

Humphrey (1980, 1987) has documented these same discriminatory pay practices used against women factory workers in Brazil during the 1980s. According to his analysis, women's disadvantage in the industrial labor force is mediated through work categories. Women's subordination in industry is achieved through the construction of work identities and management allocation principles which devalue them as workers (Humphrey 1987:193).

Humphrey (1987) identified systematic differences between the type of control exerted over men and women in the factories. Women experience a higher degree of supervision, control and pressure to increase production than men.

Women get fewer coffee breaks and bathroom breaks (although these practices are not necessarily accepted without resistance as will be noted in Chapter 3).

Management explanations for this differential treatment of women usually hinge on women's "natural docility," as noted by Elson and Pearson:

Women are considered not only to have naturally nimble fingers, but also to be naturally more docile and willing to accept tough work discipline, and naturally less inclined to join trade unions than men; and to be naturally more suited to tedious, repetitious, monotonous work. (1981:93)

In relation to this alleged docility, Humphrey says: "It is not femaleness which determines women's attitudes, but rather their experience of work" (1987:135). Their confinement to low wage, unskilled and unstable jobs makes women more subject to control and supervision than men in well-paid skilled jobs. Women workers are concentrated in quality control and low level production jobs

(Humphrey 1987:193). These types of jobs are tightly controlled and defined by management. Production line work is devalued and considered less important than the skilled (men's) jobs such as machine repair.

Unskilled male workers derive self-esteem from physical sacrifice and strength and use this to guard against excessive exertions of authority on the part of management (Willis 1977:150). Aggression and the implied threat of violence characterize male behavior toward women in factory hierarchies, but are not tolerated between male supervisors and male employees (Humphrey 1987:138-139).

While such conditions as these in factories may lead one to expect that women feel so devalued as to never react, the historical examples which are presented next reveal that they do. At times factory women have even taken the lead over men in collective political action. As the industrial working class becomes concentrated in urban areas in congested working class-only neighborhoods, women defend class consumption interests in living conditions and urban services (Castells 1983). As those designated socially to deal with household consumption needs, women assume leading roles in these areas of political activism. Women factory workers have constituted the leadership in strikes and protests in two historical examples which are described next.

## Early Examples of Political Activism by Women Factory Workers

As early as the 1880s, there were strikes in which women workers were important in the French tobacco industry. Another important early example of working class political activism was the Glasgow Rent Strike of 1915. These two strikes will be treated at some length because they show a connection between industrialization, urbanization and women's significance in political action which unifies factory and housing, work and residence.

Household division of labor and factory women's strikes. Tilly (1986) examines the "mix" of organization of production and household division of labor to understand women's oppression and the actions which they take to confront it. In Tilly's review of the tobacco industry strikes in the 1880s in Lyons, their family position and the organization of production determined women's reactions. Women supported husbands on strike, and at other times they struck on their own behalf, or protested high consumer prices.

Tilly (1986) suggests that women tend to act collectively more often as workers under four conditions which appear pertinent to the Brazilian case study. The first condition is that they associate with others with similar interests. The factory work gave them a new set of social contacts independent of their families. Secondly, their employers must be dependent on their regular labor supply. In times of war for example, women can make more demands. Thirdly, there should be an economic climate in which withdrawal of labor represents a real burden for employers. Finally, the position of women workers in the household division of labor must give them the opportunity to act autonomously. Daughters still under close supervision by their families are less active than married women who are primary and sometimes sole breadwinners for their households.

Urbanization and working class women's political participation. In another historical study, Castells (1983) has analyzed the participation of women in the Glasgow Rent Strikes of 1915. He cites this participation as a manifestation of the significant relationship between the urbanization process which accompanies industrialization and women's participation in collective action. Women were the dominant social actors in this early example of an urban social movement because they were believed to be the best representatives of their families' consumer demands and community-based social concerns.

The housing movement began when the Independent Labor Party Housing Committee and the Women's Labor League combined forces to form the Glasgow Women's Housing Association. Four women were the leaders--Mary Barbour (a housewife whose husband was a skilled worker), Mary Laird, Mrs. Ferguson, and Helen Crawfurd (a suffragette who had been jailed three times). The movement was fortified by women operating through grassroots organizations in working class communities.

As more and more displaced Irish workers were brought into the city for wartime work, landlords took advantage of a housing shortage by raising rents in
increments of as much as 23%. During the Rent Strike workers not only refused to
pay the increases, but they protected each other from eviction even to the point of
violent confrontation. Women pelted sheriffs' men who came to evict tenants with
garbage, flour and any other household goods they could grab. They held street
demonstrations to support Labor proposals for new housing. Several communities
came to be involved--heavily industrial areas, artisanal areas and slum areas
(Castells 1983:29-30).

Castells (1983) suggests that the most important feature of this movement was that the industrial working class was defending its consumption interests in the area of living conditions. These rent strikes were evidence of an organized and militant working class "fighting for the reproduction of its labor power" and appealing to the state to provide for its "collective welfare" (Castells 1983:32). The movement expressed no feminist demands. As Castells (1983:32) states, women were "the actors, not the subjects, of the protest." Instead women made claims in behalf of their families. They were acting within their roles as consumption agents in the family even when they were also factory workers. The Glasgow strike was a women's movement not a feminist movement (Castells 1983).

The Glasgow Rent Strike shows the connection between industrialization and urbanization. The housing crisis was caused by industrial concentration. The urban struggles for shelter and public services were based on labor organization both in the factories and in the working class residential communities. Women were the only ones who could unify work and residence, factories and housing. They understood the social character of the consumption process as beyond wage demands at the point of production (Castells 1983:33). They organized through a formal political institution, the Labor Party, but also used direct action. Castells (1983) points out that this rare combination in the early stages of working class mobilization was related to "the women's perception and consciousness of social experience" (Castells 1983:33).

I have summarized some general historical conditions under which women factory workers in Europe became active. The next literature reviewed concerns the emergence of working class community political organization in Brazil. The *coup d'etat* of 1964 preceded extremely repressive measures which destroyed most formal political networks. To fill this political void, new grassroots organizing began in Brazilian cities which centered around small groups mostly made up of women.

#### Literature Review: Women's Participation in Latin American Social Movements

As a result of the repressive measures taken by the Brazilian military government from 1964 through 1974 (to be described in more detail in Chapter 2), new community-oriented organizational strategies emerged. The Catholic church and the only legal opposition party, the *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (MDB) or Brazilian Democratic Movement, began a slow process of nonviolent resistance. The church organized justice and peace committees after the decisions of Vatican II and other religious grass-roots organizations. The small groups organized by the

church among working class people led to a movement of ecclesial base communities (CEBs, *comunidades de base*) and rural and urban trade union renewal in the 1970s (Singer 1982; Alves 1989).

While the trade union movement remained male-dominated, community organizations became the principal domain of working class women's activism.

Researchers bound to orthodox conceptualizations of class consciousness have suggested that working class women in Brazil's industrializing cities are political "dead weight" (Frederico 1978a, 1978b) because of their absence from unions.

However, the next section describes considerable participation by women in working class political action organized at the community level.

Community organizations in which women predominate include the cost of living Movement, the church-based groups or Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) associated with liberation theology, Neighborhood Friends' Societies, and favela commissions. Protests of austerity measures, notably the São Paulo food riots, in the mid-1980s principally involved women as the defenders of consumption interests of working class households. These austerity protests are detailed in Chapter Two. Finally, the new labor party (PT) has become a major new opposition party known for its heavy reliance on women at various levels in party politics.

Working class women receive validation as public political leaders in these community-based organizations. As they re-define themselves as legitimate public actors, they challenge traditional social norms which constrain women in public political activity (Durham 1984; Caldeira 1987).

#### Women and the Brazilian Cost of Living Movement

Singer (1982) has shown women in charge of household consumption to be the force behind the cost of living Movement in São Paulo. They helped form communal shopping groups in the late 1970s. These were women in squatter settlements. In this case, women's non-involvement in the production process made it easier for them to defy the established order.

The 1970s brought two broad social movements led by women—the movement against the high cost of living and the fight for public nurseries. The cost of living movement was previously carried on by the unions. Because unions were under federal intervention (government officials assuming the posts of directors in many unions and most labor leaders imprisoned) from 1964 through 1974, the women's movement had to continue that campaign. This cost of living movement demonstrated that the "Brazilian miracle" was being paid for by the working class with a loss in the buying power of their salaries and a growing infant mortality rate.

This movement was later absorbed by other social movements such as the Filhos da Terra (Children of the Earth, a movement for free urban land), and the organized push for greater urban services through favela commissions and neighborhood associations. These neighborhood-based social movements joined forces with striking laborers in 1978 and 1979. The demand for public nurseries led to the construction of municipal nurseries in 1980 and state nurseries in 1984.

"Liberation theology," an ideology which encourages dissent among the poor, has had a pervasive influence among the Brazilian working class. Interview material presented in Chapter Four reveals some of the impact of liberation theologies on favela commissions headed by women. The next discussion concerns grassroots organizing through church-based groups.

#### "Liberation Theology" and Brazilian Working Class Women

The many forms of community activism must be considered within the Brazilian historical context. According to Eckstein (1989:20), the particular set of historical experiences which have shaped the Latin American "repertoire of defiance" include dependence on foreign trade, technology and capital, a bureaucracy which is centralized in tradition, and a Catholic-inspired world view. The pervasiveness of "ecclesial base communities" (CEBs) in Brazil's urban areas relates directly to this set of experiences.

Liberation theology has given great impetus to working class political activism in Brazil. The economic dependency of Brazil on foreign capital has produced the world's largest international debt. The austerity measures which have accompanied that debt encouraged the new union activism of the late 1970s and stimulated community protests in the 1980s as the buying power of workers' salaries continued to be seriously undermined by salary legislation known as the "belt-tightening laws" (Alves 1989: 280).

Since the 1960s, Vatican II-grounded "liberation theology" has nurtured dissent in grassroots ecclesial base communities (CEBs). This theology stresses justice and equality for the poor. Especially where economic dislocations have broken traditional social bonds in Central America, Chile and Brazil, liberation theology has taken hold (Walton 1989). CEBs have pushed forward protests of austerity in the Dominican Republic, supported revolutionary movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador and exerted pressure for democratization in Brazil, Chile and Haiti.

CEBs are small and homogeneous (10-30 people) and strive for community. They stress their link to the church and they stress that the group constitutes a base-the faithful at the base of the church hierarchy or the poor at the base of the social pyramid. They are sponsored by nuns or priests who came to live with the people in favela communities. Ecclesial base communities provide an institutional network in which people with similar deprivations meet regularly and recognize their shared problems. Even if people did not initially join with this goal in mind, they may be

mobilized through their involvement. When people with similar private grievances are brought together, they are likely to feel that these are collectively shared and collectively soluble.

These base groups have become a place where lay people have developed leadership skills (Walton 1989: 30-31). And as noted by Caldeira (1987) and Durham (1984), these lay people who are gaining leadership skills are mostly women. An interview with one woman from a base community in Diadema will be presented in Chapter 4.

According to Levine and Mainwaring (1989:214), base communities emerged earlier in Brazil than in other Latin American countries. In Brazil, they first appeared immediately before the 1964 military coup. From that time forward, the Brazilian church has been a model for progressives throughout Latin America. By the mid-1970s it was considered the most progressive in the world (Walton 1989). Some church spokespeople estimate that there are now 100,000 CEBs in Brazil in which over two million people participate. Ecclesial base communities have been a priority of the Brazilian Church; about 80 bishops of the total 350 Catholic bishops promote them (Walton 1989).

Poor people are urged to participate in institutional politics through the CEBs. They are encouraged to participate in social movements and political parties to change elitist political patterns and non-egalitarian social structures. At the same time that these base communities began to challenge elitist political patterns in the 1970s, the autonomous labor movement also challenged elitist popular exclusion. As a result of these practices by the CEBs, people who have participated are now among the leaders of neighborhood associations, labor unions, and peasant unions (Levine and Mainwaring 1989:216).

#### Conclusions

This chapter has summarized several different views on social movements, working class political action and the sources of women's oppression. In this chapter, I have contrasted some feminist and Marxist theoretical approaches as to whether work experiences or neighborhood experiences are primary in the mobilization of women to take collective political action. Finally, I have described some of the recent participation by women in Brazilian social movements.

The following observations emerge from the review of research related to Brazilian factory women, the sexual division of labor, and working class politics:

1) Not only women's participation in collective work experiences, but women's participation in the public sphere of politics changes their views of themselves in a fundamental way (Durham 1984, Caldeira 1987);

2) Women's confinement to low wage, unskilled, and unstable production jobs makes them more subject to control and supervision than men in well paid skilled jobs (Humphrey 1987);

3) According to Beneria and Roldán (1986) and Humphrey (1987), labor market structures incorporate gender hierarchies, but do not cause them; and 4) As the industrial working class becomes concentrated in urban areas in congested working class-only neighborhoods, women are defending class consumption interests in living conditions and urban services (Castells 1977, 1983; Tilly 1986).

Based on these fundamental observations from the review of related research, I will develop these central arguments in subsequent chapters:

"Gendered" class experiences derive from the impact of the sexual division of labor on factory organization, the labor union, political parties, and neighborhood organizations. Diversity in living and working conditions for factory men and women generates different political practices (Lobo and Higgs 1983, Lobo et al. 1989). That is, patriarchal relationships follow women not only into the work place.

but also into the political arena. A heterogeneity of class experiences exists within the working class which relates to the cultural definition of gender and the sexual division of labor.

Chapter 2 describes the political and historical context for this field study. Relevant labor history includes the corporativist union structure installed by Vargas in the 1930s, its functions during the late 1960s, and the new combative unionism of the late 1970s and of the 1980s. The inclusion of working class women in the new Workers' Party (PT) is discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 also describes the participation of working class women in regional movements of social protest in the 1980s and related political economic developments in Brazil from 1985 to 1990.

Chapters 3 and 4 present two different kinds of data from the fieldwork.

Chapter 3 presents gender inequalities in wages in chemical and pharmaceutical factories. These wage inequalities coincide with gender differences in political action which derive from the impact of the sexual division of labor on various aspects of the lives of working class women. The sexual division of labor has a dual impact. It structures labor and it structures political activity. It structures labor in the factory, labor in the neighborhoods (paid and unpaid), labor in the home, and political relationships in neighborhood-based social movements and political relationships in labor unions.

Interviews in Chapter 4 provide first-hand accounts of repressive measures taken by the national and state governments in response to intense union activity in São Paulo between October 1983 and June 1984. These interviews, mainly from working class women activists, reveal that in spite of police repression which is sometimes intense and violent in Brazil, women remain politically active. They suggest that working class women remain committed to union politics. The interviews also reveal the thriving community-based organizations led by working class women in the city of São Paulo. Some of these community organizations

appear to relate to ecclesial base communities and others relate to the grassroots organizing of the PT (Workers' Party).

Chapter 5 summarizes the conclusions. One theoretical focus of my research came to be a critique of certain male biases (androcentricity) in sociological and anthropological inquiry. These Brazilian working class women's constructions of their identities as workers and political actors cannot be understood within the traditional confines of orthodox Marxist theory regarding class consciousness. A homogeneous working class with both men and women who construct their identities basically in relation to wage work is a concept born out of androcentric thinking. The factory women and the neighborhood activists whom I studied simply do not fit into that mold. Their political activism was not dependent upon participation in wage labor, but was more often related to social experiences as part of working class people organizing themselves through their neighborhood.

Most importantly, the accounts presented in the chapters which follow suggest that working class women are active participants in Brazil's political process. The women in this study did not have "false consciousness" nor are they "dead weight" in the labor movement. Instead, these factory women found themselves sometimes actively excluded by men who dominate Brazilian labor organizations.

Working class women find comparatively more "political space" to participate as leaders in the neighborhood social movements in São Paulo. Working class women must struggle against men in order to achieve better salaries and in order to organize within the labor movement. As Humphrey (1987) has shown, managers are usually men and they have generally established policies to promote men and not women workers. Many women are actively participating in the Brazilian union movement, but they sometimes choose to circumvent the male-dominated labor unions and organize their own strikes. Women began to organize their own labor

conferences in the 1980s again circumventing male domination of institutionalized politics (Lobo et al. 1989).

Women factory workers encounter considerable opposition from men in work and union hierarchies. The expansion of the structures of power (cúpulas dirigentes) to include women is minimal despite 15 to 20 years of active involvement by women in many kinds of social movements in Brazil (Diniz 1984, Avelar 1987). Women are under-represented in opposition party structures (such as the PT and the PMDB) and as elected directors of official labor unions. The chapters which follow will demonstrate, however, that women are struggling to participate in these official political institutions.

# CHAPTER 2 LABOR HISTORY, DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN BRAZII.

#### Introduction

This chapter will summarize some major political and economic events which have occurred in Brazil from 1960 to 1990. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the historical context for the fieldwork which was done in 1983 and 1984 on women in the labor movement and in neighborhood-based social movements in São Paulo. Some historical information will be presented from the 1940s when Vargas installed the basic labor code which has defined Brazilian union structure up until the present day. The Vargas labor code (CLT, Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho) has had a profound impact on the Brazilian labor movement. The labor union structure which Vargas defined has remained essentially intact, although since 1978 factory committees have been "chipping away" at that basic union structure. I will briefly describe the historic roots of today's labor movement, then go on to discuss the repression of labor activism and related social movements during the period from 1964 to 1974. I will summarize the impact of the return to democracy from 1974 to 1984 on developing social movements in which women are participating in São Paulo and finally I will describe some of the major economic and political events in Brazil from 1985 through 1990.

The major topics which I will cover in this chapter include labor history and the rise and fall of democracy, the Vargas heritage for the labor union movement, the methods used by the state to repress social activism in Brazil during the period of military rule from 1964 through 1978, the process of redemocratization (1974-84), the labor movement and collective bargaining, the Brazilian women's movement and regional movements of social protest from 1960 to 1990, the new unionism of post-1978 including the emergence of the Workers' Party (PT), the relationship of the PT to Brazilian social movements in the 1980s, the economic crisis in the early 1980s and the response of the labor movement to that economic crisis, the invisibility of women in the official political history of the labor movement, workers' rights under the new Brazilian constitution of 1988, and finally the new president's economic policies introduced in 1990.

#### Labor History and the Rise and Fall of Democracy in Brazil

Careful scrutiny of Brazilian labor movement history from 1960 through 1990 suggests an interesting correspondence between severe military repression of the Brazilian labor movement and social activism led by women in working class neighborhoods. Increasing federal takeovers of militant labor unions and massive numbers of arrests of labor leaders and "leftist" party activists occurred during the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil. During this same period, women's informal political participation increased. The emerging middle class based feminist movement and the working class based Cost of Living movement grew increasingly stronger at that time to apparently fill the political and social void left after the military government attacked formerly established leftist political parties and the union movement.

During the 1980s as the male-dominated labor movement appeared to begin to shake loose from federal control, working class and middle class women continued to remain an active informal political force in Brazil. In various types of neighborhood organizations, Brazilian women have been demonstrating that "they have come to stay" (Lobo et al. 1989).

#### A Brief History of Brazilian Organized Labor

In the early Twentieth Century in Brazil, the first unions were established by immigrant workers with socialist ideas from Europe (Pinheiro and Hall 1979). During the period from 1890 to 1920 industrialization increased and the number of unions increased dramatically. By 1930 the number of union members was estimated to be one million, but the labor movement itself was politically weakened because of major divisions among communists, socialists and anarcho-socialists (Pinheiro and Hall 1979; Andrade 1985).

#### The Vargas Heritage for the Labor Union Movement

In 1937, Vargas passed legislation to improve living and working conditions and created a Ministry of Labor with the power to intervene in the internal affairs of the labor unions (Erickson 1970). The essence of the corporativist union structure which was installed in Brazil by Vargas is that it centralizes control over all social classes or sectors in the national government (Andrade 1985; Erickson 1970, 1977). Corporativist union structure has now even survived the re-writing of the Brazilian Constitution in 1988.

The trade unions are the organizations that represent the workers before the labor courts. The state labor courts are to resolve the disputes between workers and employers. The labor union structure is organized into three levels--local state and national. At the bottom of the labor hierarchy are the local unions, the *sindicatos*, which represent workers usually in only one municipality. These *sindicatos* are linked at the state level in federations and at the national level in seven nonagricultural confederations (Maia Gomes 1986:161). No association at the

national level similar to the CGT in Argentina or the former CULT in Chile unites the confederations in Brazil. During the 1980s, however, the movement for a national confederation, a *Central Unica* emerged and began to compete with another major confederation, the Brazilian CGT to serve this function. I will discuss this movement more later in this chapter.

The labor movement is fragmented through the operation of three government-specified organizational principles: 1) Exclusive representation. Only one labor organization is officially recognized for each municipality or zone; 2) Organization by craft and industry. A sindicato covers workers in "identical, similar, or connected trades;" and 3) Geographical fragmentation. Each sindicato is autonomous. That is, it has no formal direct horizontal links with sindicatos representing workers in other industries in the same area or with sindicatos representing workers in the same industry in other areas (Maia Gomes 1986:163).

The government has several other means to control the labor unions. One is through direct intervention; the government can close down a labor union and replace the leaders with its own appointees. The government also controls eligibility requirements for those allowed to run for office in the labor unions. And finally, the government has another very effective weapon for control of labor unions--legal control over the unions' funds. Union funds are compiled from a compulsory tax on all workers and if the government does not approve of a *sindicato*, it can freeze the funds.

Vargas made the state the arbitrator between major groups in society such as labor organizations, business corporations and the church (Andrade 1985; Erickson 1970). Basic salaries were decreed by the president and new wage settlements were usually negotiated through the Ministry of Labor and related labor courts. The corporativist union structure enabled the federal government to maintain considerable control over wage negotiations until after 1978. A brief hiatus in

federal control over wages occurred during the 1950s and early 1960s, although real challenges to government economic control did not come from the organized labor movement until the 1980s.

Vargas challenged an already weakened and divided labor movement by installing a "federal paternalistic system" (Erickson 1970). Erickson (1970) suggests that this paternalistic system weakened the labor movement even as recently as the 1960s. What Erickson referred to as federal paternalism, others refer to as patronclient relationships which pervade Brazilian politics at every level (Caldeira 1986; Gay 1990). According to Gay (1990), these patron-client relationships remained pervasive in the 1980s, but other influences began to be observable in organized urban communities in Rio de Janeiro. Gay (1990: 115) identified signs of "ideological commitments to working class based political parties."

According to Andrade (1985), a re-emergence of significant socialist influence in the Brazilian labor movement came in the period from 1958 to 1964. During this six year period, hundreds of strikes occurred throughout the country. The peak in the strikes came in 1964 when massive public demonstrations were held for the legalization of the Communist Party. Erickson (1970) suggests that strong challenges to federal government hegemony over wages levels occurred only briefly in 1963 and 1964 and then the labor movement was crushed by the new military government which took over in Brazil in 1964. According to Erickson (1970), the Minister of Labor in 1963 and 1964 under Joao Goulart was a socialist and his protective influence in the Goulart cabinet allowed the brief resurgence of activism. At that time, organized labor briefly forged an alliance with key military leaders who protected strikers against other segments of the military (Erickson 1970).

A military coup ended civilian rule in Brazil in 1964. An estimated 400 local unions, 76 labor federations and four of the six labor confederations were immediately taken over by the federal government when the military took over in

1964. The new military administration ousted the elected labor leaders and appointed new ones in all of the politically active labor unions.

### State Intervention in Brazilian Trade Unions, Attacks on Social Activists, 1967-1968

In 1968, Congress was closed for almost a year. During this time, the executive ruled by decree, creating the National Security Law of 1969. This law defined any political opposition activities as crimes against the state. Militant labor leaders were considered by the military government to be communist and thousands of labor leaders were put in prison (Andrade 1985; Alves 1989).

Organized working class dissent was devastated by the military regime through the use of three new "security laws." The National Information Service (SNI) was established by decree to officially control opposition organizations. The SNI was to collect information on individual citizens who might create opposition to the government and it became "a network of internal espionage" (Alves 1989: 281). Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5) was enacted in December 1968. The powerful AI-5 basically suspended all civil rights by eliminating habeas corpus. Using these two laws as justification, police blitzes were conducted regularly in working-class neighborhoods in urban and rural areas. Torture was used to intimidate as well as to elicit information about the activities of the armed urban guerilla movement (Alves 1989). A rural guerilla movement was virtually exterminated by General Castello Branco in the name of national security using AI-5 as his only legal basis.

This level of state repression radicalized organized government opposition groups. That is, in the face of violent government tactics, moderate "peaceful" tactics became totally impractical for those working toward social change in organized social movements. After 1967, an urban guerilla movement developed

and remained active and student demonstrations were intense (especially in 1968) (Alves 1989; Patai 1988).

Throughout the 1970s (using AI-5), the Ministry of Labor intervened in trade unions, removed elected officials from office, cancelled union elections, and even dissolved opposition trade unions and created others (Alves 1989). Federal wage legislation weakened the position of unions not only by eliminating bargaining rights but also voiding the right to strike. Some sectors of the middle class began to develop a political opposition, but the working class experienced arrests and exile of hundreds of leaders.

Military repression of working class based social movements and especially the labor movement began in 1964 and continued until 1978. During that time some estimates suggest that more than 10,000 people were put in prison because of their political activism (Veja 1988).

#### The Process of Redemocratization, 1974-84

General Geisel initiated the return to civilian rule in 1974. Continuous military takeover of trade unions had disorganized the labor movement, but after 1974 clandestine organization inside the plants and within the trade unions began to develop (Alves 1989). This underground labor organization emerged as a visible force negotiating more favorable wage adjustments by the federal government in 1978 and 1979. The new Workers' Party (PT) grew out of this newly dynamic labor movement in 1980. The development of that party will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Geisel was followed as president by a former army sergeant and former head of SNI, Joao Figueiredo. During the Figueiredo years (1983 and 1984), there were food riots, riots which included the burning of buses and subway cars, and

demonstrations in major metropolitan areas including São Paulo, Fortaleza, and Rio de Janeiro (Levine and Mainwaring 1989). The PMDB also mounted a broad public campaign for Direct Elections with an immediate goal to replace the president by direct vote with a civilian.

These public demonstrations were protests against increasing unemployment, annual inflation of over 200% and the decreasing buying power of the minimum wage. There were two general strikes called by the PT in 1983. The one in July (described in an interview presented in Chapter 4) was not as successful as the one organized in October. An estimated one million metalworkers participated in a general strike in late 1983 in São Paulo (Folha de São Paulo, October 1983). These massive public protests were attributed mainly to the organizational abilities of two political opposition parties, the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) and the PT (Andrade 1985).

In the face of an economic disaster and rising discontent, Figueiredo should have been anxious to relinquish military control. In fact the military was not able to hang onto control of the "transition to democracy" and the first civilian president was achieved even before the Campaign for Direct Elections was won. The first civilian president was indirectly appointed by a voting of Congressional delegates in January, 1984.

#### The Labor Movement and Collective Bargaining

The power to negotiate wages first came under the control of the federal government through the establishment of minimum wage laws. The minimum wage was initially established in 1940 by the Vargas labor code and has become the key index in determining rents, salaries and other price indexes. After a period of

increasing union activism in wage negotiation from 1950 to 1964, wage control returned to the national military government in 1964.

From 1965 to 1978, labor unions were forbidden to negotiate wages. They served mainly as sources of social welfare such as dental services, medical services, some technical school training, etc. This social welfare function was basically according to the Vargas labor code (CLT).

Massive strikes took place mainly in the São Paulo region throughout 1978 and 1979 which resulted in new bargaining power gained by the labor movement in relation to a more liberal federal government. The wage law of 1979 introduced a productivity qualification as a justification for collective bargaining for wage increases to be carried out by the labor unions.

This new wage law came after a decade of militant labor union activity during which two primary demands were advanced through new grassroots mobilization of the working class. During the 1970s, labor union militants demanded direct bargaining and the right to form factory workers' committees. After 1979, salaries were decreed twice a year according to a formula indexing inflation. This salary legislation, referred to as the "belt-tightening laws," drastically reduced the buying power of workers and promoted concentration of income (Alves 1989: 280).

During the period from 1979 to 1983, the new wage laws allowed the lowest paid workers to receive an average annual wage increase of 10% to adjust for inflation. However, one negative result of this policy was increasing turnover among these workers after only three months service in favor of new employees hired at the minimum wage (DIEESE 1984b).

In 1983 because of pressure from the IMF, the federal government issued a new economic package which eliminated this 10% inflation adjustment for the lowest paid workers. These lowest paid workers, earning less than three minimum

salary units (MSUs), constituted the majority of the work force (Veja 1981:107). While those at these lowest pay grades received no salary adjustment to compensate for inflation, workers at higher wage levels (above three MSUs) received a 95% annual wage increase for the inflated cost of living. Later their wage increase was reduced from a 95% adjustment to 80%. In other words, those who needed the inflation adjustment most desperately got none, while the relatively better off received an annual adjustment in their salaries which roughly meant that their salaries doubled automatically each year.

The labor movement responded fiercely to these executive economic measures. After another general strike in October 1984, the annual cost of living increases for those earning less than three MSUs were re-instated (*Veja* 1981:107). This reinstatement was an important labor victory. It returned Cost of Living adjustments to an estimated 67% of the national labor force (*Veja* 1981: 107).

#### The New Wage Law, 1979, and the Establishment of Factory Committees

Throughout the period from 1978 through 1984, active striking and better organization in the labor movement won important wage concessions from the federal government. During the 1980s, strikes continued to be directed not to individual managements of separate companies, but instead toward the federal government wage policies.

In addition to these wage increases won from the central government, the right to officially organize in metallurgical factories was achieved in some metallurgical plants in São Paulo. The first factory committee allowed by management came at a plant run by Volkswagen in 1981 (Andrade 1985). The first factory committees in which active union representatives were allowed to continue on the shop floor were at Ford in São Bernardo do Campo in 1982. The number of

these factory committees which were officially recognized by management increased to six by mid-1985--but were limited to the metalworkers of São Paulo (Andrade 1985).

Before 1984, the minimum wage differed according to five major regions of the country (DIEESE 1984a). The minimum wage was highest in the southeast region which included the industrial triangle. This wage discrepancy stimulated even more internal migration away from the impoverished northeast into the already overcrowded São Paulo and Rio urban zones. In 1984 the number of regions became unified into a single national minimum wage (Andrade 1985). In November, 1984, the monthly minimum wage became Cr\$ 166,560 or \$63.52 in U.S. currency. Inflation in 1984 and 1985 was such that this minimum wage was reduced to only half of its initial buying power by April of 1985 (Andrade 1985). This reduction in the buying power of the minimum wage will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 using statistics from DIEESE (the labor-linked economic statistics institute).

At roughly the same time as the labor movement began to "shake loose from the shackles" of both the Vargas labor structure and the national military government restrictions, the women's movement began to emerge in Brazil. The democratization process which diminished the power of the military regime in Brazil was accompanied by the emergence of a new phase of the women's movement after 1974 (Jardim Pinto 1987; Avelar 1987). The women's movements which were reborn in the 1960s in Europe and the U.S. arrived in Latin America at the end of the 1970s (Sarti 1985, Jardim Pinto 1987).

#### The Women's Movement in Brazil, 1960 to the Present

In the 1960s, the women's movement in Brazil had a double trajectory--one part promoting conservative values and the other part oriented toward the needs of the working class (Blay 1987; Sarti 1985). The conservative part of the women's movement was defined by the March of the Family with God and for Property. This "march" was an expression of the conservative segments of society. Its stated goals were the maintenance of order, denial of the right to strike, preservation of the traditional family, protection of private property, and obedience to the hierarchies of church, family and the military (Blay 1987).

The progressive part of the women's movement was obstructed by the *coup* of March 31, 1964. In spite of the repressive measures used by the military regime, the progressive part of the women's movement renewed itself and eventually developed into a Cost of Living Movement and a Movement for Amnesty for Brazilian political exiles.

Alvarez (1989) has noted the expansion of the women's movement during the period from 1964 through 1975. She notes that the "climate of fear" which existed under Medici (1970-74) did not continue with Geisel. The celebration of the UN International Women's Day was allowed by Geisel in 1975. This occasion provided one of the first opportunities for political expression of the "politically repressed left." (Alvarez 1989:27). Geisel proposed a "loosening up" or distensao period which would open the way for a political liberalization process. Alvarez 1989:60) claims that the military regime perceived women's movements as "apolitical" and thus did not subject them to the same repression as other organizations.

The feminist movement in Brazil began in 1975 to develop such feminist projects as consciousness-raising groups, women's health projects, protests of violence against women and research to recover women's history (Sarti 1985;

Schmink 1981). The first surveys about women began in the universities. In the communities, a social movement led by women emerged demanding expansion of the system of distribution of urban services such as water, transport, and health clinics (Sarti 1985).

The ten years of the women's movement from 1975 to 1985 included a broad range of progressive goals. Women organized to speak out against the high cost of living, to support amnesty, to demand childcare centers and to denounce masculine violence. These goals were organized within the context of an ultimate goal of "reconquering democracy" (Blay 1987).

During the period of military rule, with the restriction of the civil rights of women, the Movement for Amnesty emerged as the dominant political concern in the women's movement (Blay 1987). Amnesty was granted in 1978 as a result of this action by women and many key union and community activists, both men and women, were allowed to return to Brazil. This contribution of the women's movement to the emergence of democracy was perhaps its greatest influence on contemporary political processes.

Schmink (1981) supports both Blay (1987) and Alvarez (1989) in the contention that the emergence of the women's movement cannot be viewed as separate from the overall political process of redemocratization. Schmink (1981) views feminist groups as "one element of a unified civilian push for a return to a participative society "(1981: 116).

Alvarez (1989) also attributes some of the growth in the women's movement during the 1980s to the political transformation of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church began to re-establish its legitimacy with the growing numbers of the urban poor concentrated in the squatter settlements through "liberation theology." Likewise, the grassroots women's movement organized by socialist women made its

presence felt in the urban periphery in the mid-1970s particularly in the São Paulo region.

In January, 1978, the first Congress of Women Metalworkers was held and in June, 1978, the women in chemical and pharmaceutical industries organized a similar conference. In that year, the women's movement placed the demand for union women's commissions firmly on the union agenda. Due largely to the impact of the women's movement, some unions now have women's commissions. The Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union studied here is one such union.

When the new labor opposition began in the peripheral areas of São Paulo in 1978, women's groups were active in support of the opposition candidates for the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union. During strikes, they also participated by raising strike support funds, organizing food distribution and distributing flyers encouraging women to support the strike (Skidmore 1988, Schmink 1981). While earlier women's groups in Brazil had represented educated privileged women, the new neighborhood groups of the late 1970s and early 1980s were concentrated in working class neighborhoods on the periphery of the industrial cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte (Schmink 1981).

After the 1978 elections, the Cost of Living and Amnesty Movements were absorbed by the competing opposition political parties and coalitions (Alvarez 1989). During the year 1981-82, there was a significant decline in the number of feminist-identified organizations due to "partisan tensions" (Alvarez 1989). By 1982 there was a clear split between the part of the women's movement affiliated with the PMDB and that part associated with the PT political agenda. However, Alvarez (1989) suggests that tensions associated with these competing political parties were less acute within the neighborhood-based organizations because the women from the working class movements said party politics was "men's business."

#### The Institutionalization of Women's Issues

Women's issues began to become institutionalized through the establishment of state and federal councils during the period from 1983 to 1986. The Council on Women's Condition (Conselho da Condicao Feminina) was created by Governor Montoro (PMDB, São Paulo) in 1983. This council created an occasion for a dialogue concerning the possible cooptation of the women's movement. In particular, the grassroots-based feminist groups, neighborhood associations and the Day Care Movement activists opposed that council as an adequate representation of women's interests. Even the then-president of the Council, Eva Blay, expressed fears of a loss of autonomy for the women's movement. It appeared to be an instrument designed to garner electoral support for the PMDB from the recognized women's grassroots and professional organizations.

Between 1983 and 1990, State Councils on the Status of Women were established in São Paulo, Minas Gerais and 23 other states and municipalities (Alvarez 1989). In 1986, the São Paulo State Assembly established the State Council on Women's Condition.

#### The National Council for Women's Rights

In 1985, women's issues were institutionalized at the federal level with the establishment of the National Council for Women's Rights (Alvarez 1989; *Veja* 1986).

This women's rights organization is formally linked to the Minister of Justice.

The National Council acts as a pressure group using interest group tactics to work for equal wages for equal work; equal access to the labor market and to promotion; work and pension rights for domestic servants and working rural women;

employment guarantees for pregnant women and paid leave for parents at the birth of a child

This Council was very active in promoting women as candidates for the Constituent Assembly. As a consequence, in November, 1986, 26 women were elected to the Federal Chamber of Deputies. This number is more than the total of all women elected in the past (15). Also 35 women were elected as state deputies (*Veja* 1986). This federal Council on Women's Rights also put forward a "women's proposal" for the new Brazilian Constitution (Alvarez 1989).

As a result of an intense campaign in 1986 for strong representation in the new constitutional assembly, the National Council came to play an important role in the re-writing of the Brazilian constitution and the new constitutional labor code would become known as the most progressive one in Brazilian history.

The new Brazilian Constitution of 1988 proposed the extension of the period of maternity leave and established a new right to paternity leave. The maternity leave clause in the new constitution represented one more institutional response to women's demands.

#### Special Union Battles for Women

In spite of the significance of the new National

Council for the establishment of women's rights on the Brazilian political agenda, the formation of a new union for domestics is probably of more immediate interest to Brazilian working class women. Electoral politics are likely to be of more concern to middle and upper class Brazilian women who have relatively greater chances to achieve an elected government position. However, labor statistics in 1985 showed that almost 25% of all working women in Brazil have worked as domestic servants (Veja 1985). As such, these women were not recognized as part of

a professional category. They were unprotected by any labor laws and their isolation from other workers made it difficult for them to organize. Congress did not even officially recognize domestic work as an official job category until 1973. On that occasion domestics became entitled to national health services, sick leave, paid holidays (20 days vs. the usual 30 granted to those in other job categories) and retirement.

Many domestic servants would not get the better workers' rights written into the new constitutional labor code of 1988 because they could not get a worker identification card issued by the labor ministry and signed by their employer (*Veja* 1985). I will be mentioning these domestics without work cards in Chapter 4. Their wages, left to the employers' discretion and not regulated by labor law, were often below the minimum wage (1985 exchange rates: Cz 804 monthly, US\$1 = Cz 19.50). The exploitation of these women is not limited to the economic sphere. Some reports suggest that domestic servants are also sexually abused, even used as "sexual initiators" for teenage sons (*Veia* 1985).

Many of the women I interviewed working in pharmaceutical factories in 1983 and 1984 had worked previously as domestics. That profession is part of the occupational history of many women in factory work. Any improvements in the rights and benefits of domestics might result in less pressure for women to enter factory work at such young ages and at such low pay scales.

In 1985, new legislation was introduced for recognition of the profession before congress by deputy Irma Pasolini of the PT. This would give domestics legal recognition, the right to form official unions and would entitle them to new constitutional rights which were being written into the new Brazilian constitution.

These recent developments pertaining to women should be considered within the broader context of general political and economic developments in Brazil since 1984. The next section brings the study up to date by summarizing the various economic packages which have been introduced by successive presidents in Brazil and the response of the labor movement to these packages.

#### Political and Economic Developments in Brazil from 1985 to 1990

There were two fundamental processes which shaped the social movements which were the focus of my field research in 1983 and 1984--inflation and democratization. As rampant inflation continued to put great economic pressure on both the middle class and the working class, the fires of social discontent were fueled. Meanwhile the democratization process continued to allow political activism among these socioeconomic sectors. The period from 1980 through 1990 in Brazil has been a interplay of these two basic processes.

#### The Democratization Process and the Major Opposition Parties in Brazil

The gradual loosening of the military control over the national government continued under President Joao Figueiredo in the early 1980s. During the fieldwork period (1983-84), the PT (Workers' Party) and the PMDB (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro) were the major opposition parties. The roots of the PMDB are in the MDB (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro) created in 1966. When the military were in power, the MDB was an umbrella coalition for all those political groups seeking a return to democracy by legal means (Levine and Mainwaring 1989; Alves 1989). When civilian rule returned in 1985, the PMDB became the country's

most powerful party and it absorbed politicians with previous links with the military regime.

Both the neighborhood association and the labor union which I chose for intensive fieldwork study in 1983 and 1984 were associated with the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or Workers' Party). The PT has its roots primarily in the labor movement associated with the metalworkers of the ABC region around the city of São Paulo and developed as a political entity between 1978 and 1980. The PT was thought to be a small regionally limited party at the time of my research in 1983-84, but has since emerged as a significant national party.

#### The Emergence of the PT: Party Commitment and Social Movements

The emergence of the new Workers' Party (PT) coincided with the proliferation of CEBs to produce a grassroots inclusion of women in that political party. Caldeira (1986) studied electoral politics in several São Paulo peripheral neighborhoods in 1982. She found areas of conflict between the PT and neighborhood-based organizations such as the CEBs and Neighborhood Friends' Societies. In one area of the periphery, São Miguel (see map, Figure 1-1), specific women's groups reconstituted themselves apart from the PT. The approach which Caldeira (1986, 1987) takes toward the PT in São Paulo neighborhoods is similar to that of Gay (1990) in his study of PMDB electoral politics in neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro. These two researchers treat the opposition parties, the PT and the PMDB, as sometimes antagonistic toward the material interests of the working class. That is, according to Gay (1990) and Caldeira (1986), even these opposition parties appear to be more interested in building a political base of electoral support than in promoting the demands of the working class.

Gay (1990) concluded that clientelism produced significant improvements in the physical quality of life in the working class (favela) neighborhood which he studied. The traditional neighborhood association which he studied "auctioned" off the votes of the entire neighborhood to the local candidate who could offer the best building improvements and construction materials. As Gay has stated, such a strategy can yield immediate material benefits: "In a society marked by extreme poverty and inequality, the short-term benefits from vote transactions are high" (1990:115).

In a different favela in Rio de Janeiro, Gay (1990) documented a move away from traditional clientelism in local Brazilian politics. Faced with eviction from the favela in the 1970s when the strategy favored by the Brazilian government was to bulldoze them, this community organized itself and refused to leave. The shared experience of the attempted removal became an important part of the community history. The leadership in this favela articulated a different view of electoral politics; these favela leaders emphasized that political parties were the only institutional vehicles which could force real social change in Brazil.

Keck (1986) has a view of the relationship between the working class and the PT which differs from those of Gay (1990) and Caldeira (1986). The PT was founded in late 1979 by labor leaders, intellectuals, and social movement activists who were attempting to create political unity among a variety of groups and movements demanding social justice. That party was conceived as a socialist mass party based in the working class and active in both formal politics and in social movements (Keck 1986). A primary goal of the PT was to promote "participatory citizenship and class consciousness" (Keck 1986: 70) According to Keck (1986), the founders of the PT stated that the organization of the PT as a legal political party would not eliminate the need to remain a social movement even though the tension between these two aspects of the party's self-definition was often difficult to resolve.

My fieldwork observations revealed that many PT activists were simultaneously involved in that political party and in various social movements which were under way in São Paulo in 1983 and 1984.

Keck (1986:70) concludes that the PT is not a "class party in the classic sense." It is not a political party associated solely with the working class even though a large part of its constituency is from the working class. The party has a general orientation toward "social empowerment" and includes middle class intellectuals, "new" working class sectors such as bank workers and teachers; social movement activists from neighborhood movements, members of CEBs, activists from "new" social movements such as ecologists and homosexuals; and members of clandestine parties including Trotskyists and offshoots of the Brazilian Communist Party (Keck 1986).

In spite of the multiclass composition of the PT, some of my detailed interviews presented in Chapter 4 suggest that many independent working class activists view the PT as a party which emerged "from the workers." These interviews generally support Keck's (1986) view of the PT. Unlike other political parties which have existed in recent Brazilian history, the PT candidates for formal political offices are often workers from the factory floor (i.e. production line employees) and rural working class activists. These candidates have clear ties to the working class. They include the new mayor of São Paulo elected in 1988 (Luiza Erundina de Souza, "Erundina," a former activist in the *favela* movement) (Hinchberger 1989), the mayor of Diadema elected in 1982 (a former factory worker referred to in one interview presented in Chapter 4, and the national PT candidate for president in 1989 ("Lula," a former lathe operator in the auto industry). In fact, mayors from the PT were elected in all of the "ABCD region" in 1988 (Hinchberger 1989). In electoral politics, another opposition political party, the PMDB, is also thriving.

The return to civilian rule came immediately after I completed my fieldwork in 1984. Tancredo Neves won the office of president through indirect election by the Congressional delegates in 1984, but he never actually took office although he was due to assume the presidency in January, 1985. His vice-president, Sarney, took over when president Tancredo Neves became ill in March of 1985. Forty days later, Tancredo died and Sarney became the first civilian president in Brazil since the 1964 coup.

As further evidence of the continuation of the political changes opening the way for democratic rule in Brazil, new political parties began to proliferate in late 1986. September, 1986 reports showed that within four months of the new party law, the number of legally registered parties rose from 5 to 26 and another four began taking steps (September 1986, Brazil Report). The PCB and the PC do B became officially recognized as legal parties; the rest of the leftist groups remained within the larger parties of the PT and PMDB (September 1986, Brazil Report).

Democratization continued during the 1980s as the public pressed for the right to directly vote for president. During my fieldwork, massive public demonstrations were organized by the PMDB for the right to vote for president. One rally in São Paulo in 1984 which I attended was estimated to have included one and a half million people both from the middle and working classes. The opportunity to vote for president finally came in 1989 when Collor became the first elected president in Brazil in 29 years.

Presidents Sarney and Collor have responded to the continuing economic crisis in Brazil by inaugurating a series of economic packages. Sarney's economic plans appeared to have been strongly influenced by the austerity requirements of the IMF. Public sector inefficiencies persist and fiscal management has been poor. The series of economic packages have failed to resolve Brazil's economic problems.

The results of these economic packages have been increasing unemployment both for the middle and the working classes and increasing inflation. This inflation along with successive wage freezes has produced a significant decline in the real buying power of wages which has been felt strongly throughout the 1980s. The labor movement has responded to these austerity measures with massive striking particularly in the latter part of the 1980s. Other working class responses have included spontaneous food riots and boycotts organized by women's Cost of Living groups. Women also protest their empty cupboards which they attribute to these government austerity plans by "banging their pots and pans" in organized public protests. The middle class response has been emigration out to cities such as New York in search of better pay or return back to countries of origin such as Portugal.

## <u>President Sarney's Economic Packages and Labor Activism in Response to the Growing Economic Crisis</u>

By January, 1986, the annual rate of inflation in Brazil reached 238% (March 19, 1986, Brazil Report). In response the Sarney government froze prices on food staples such as rice, beans, meat and sugar, created a treasury secretariat to tighten control of government spending, and set a 40% minimum reserve requirement on savings accounts.

Some publications reported that the responses of shop owners to the price reductions demanded by the federal government were to clear their shelves of now unprofitable items. Products whose prices were lowered when the President's *Plano Cruzado* (Tropical Plan) went into effect were pulled from the shelves by the shop owners to prevent loss of profits. These basic products included cleaning products, canned foods and clothing (Brazil Report, March 19, 1986). As defenders of household consumption interests, one would expect some kind of collective political

response from women in the neighborhood associations. However, the major media publications give no evidence of such a response from the community.

#### Labor Strikes in Response to the 1986 Economic Package

The Brazilian labor unions responded to Sarney's economic package by striking. Over one million state school teachers went on strike for a pay raise amounting to three times the minimum wage (US\$58 to US\$174). We can infer that women participated in great numbers in these strikes because schoolteachers are predominantly women.

In São Paulo in April, 1986, a strike of the underground transport system was called by the *Central Unica dos Trabalhadores* (CUT), the labor confederation founded by the PT. The major demand was for a 25% wage bonus. In Brasília, strikes continued in May involving 40,000 workers who demanded a 105% wage increase to account for the impact of inflation. In Rio de Janeiro, two million rail workers and dock workers also struck for pay increases. A total of 44 strikes occurred during the first four months of 1986 after the *Plano Cruzado* was declared in effect on February 28, 1986. Frequent massive striking continued through August, 1986 (Brazil Report, March 19, 1986).

The Minister of Labor, Pazzionotto, proposed a strike law in mid-1985 to be submitted to congress in late July of 1986. This law would determine "essential" areas where strikes would not be allowed including the sectors of electricity, transport, telecommunications, postal services, ports, sanitation, medical assistance and fuel. Observers said that one of the law's objectives was to "clip the wings" of trade union umbrella organizations such as the CUT (The Central Union founded by the PT-linked sector of the labor movement) which was blamed by the government for much of the recent striking (March 19, 1986 Brazil Report).

#### The Cost of Living Indices

During 1985, Brazil passed through three different indices to calculate the cost of living. The *Plano Cruzado* introduced another new index, the PPC, in 1986. This latest index, according to DIEESE (the labor union-linked economic institute) did not manipulate figures to cheat waged workers in contrast to the Cost of Living indices calculated when Delfim Netto was Finance Minister in the 1970s. Delfim Netto's calculations were shown by DIEESE to be have been falsified in 1978 and 1979. This exposure of the falsification of the index precipitated the series of metalworkers' strikes which revitalized the union movement in 1978 and 1979.

These Cost of Living indices relate both to labor activity and to demands made by neighborhood committees. As has been mentioned previously, women have been active since the 1960s in the Cost of Living movement. Working class women have organized to pressure local businesses and local government officials for control of the prices of basic household goods. For example, they organize boycotts of expensive butcher shops. These indices are also used by the labor unions to calculate demands for periodic wage increases.

During my fieldwork, I observed that these indices were carefully analyzed during small group meetings among factory workers. When a great discrepancy became apparent between the estimated cost of the minimum basic ration and the minimum salary, neighborhood organizations and the "opposition unions" (metalworkers, bank workers, chemical and pharmaceutical workers) reacted in unison with strikes and various forms of public demonstrations. This growing discrepancy has become known as the "salary squeeze" (arrocho salarial).

### Strikes After the 1987 Bresser Plan

Throughout 1986, there was an upswing in anti-government strikes (October 23, 1986, Brazil Report). Figures from the two major labor confederations, the CUT and the CGT (Central Geral dos Trabalhadores), showed that from January through September, 1986, 6.3 million workers had gone on strike (October 23, 1986, Brazil Report). Bank workers had held a two-day national strike. Other strikes involved civil servants, public (state) schoolteachers, VASP employees (the commercial airline), dock workers in the port of Santos and public metalworkers in Rio de Janeiro. Another 1.5 million were expected to strike in the state of São Paulo on October 23, a "national day of protest" declared by the CUT for land, wages, employment and freedom and the unconditional right to strike. According to the government, these strikes were "political," a direct challenge to its authority and designed to "destabilize the democratic regime" of Sarney (October 23, 1986, Brazil Report).

### The New Minimum Wage of 1987

The Bresser Plan (or the *Novo Cruzado* austerity plan) was announced in June, 1987. It was designed to force a fall in domestic demand through a violent reduction in real wages. It imposed a 90-day freeze on prices, ended automatic wage adjustments, removed subsidies on some agricultural products, curbed government spending and enforced big increases in tariffs on public utilities (July 9, 1987, Brazil Report).

The Brazilian minimum wage was frozen at Cz\$1969 (about US\$44) a month according to the Bresser Plan (August 13, 1987, Brazil Report). The new Brazilian minimum wage became one of the lowest in Latin America. The minimum wage is

defined in the constitution as the amount needed to supply a family of four with the basic requirements of food, housing, health care, education and transportation. Based on that concept, DIEESE calculated the minimum wage should be 6.5 times greater than the level established by the new 1987 decree (July 9, 1987, Brazil Report).

The Minister of Labor under Sarney, Pazzianotto, called for an immediate 51% increase in the minimum wage and was turned down by the president. In response to the loss of the automatic wage adjustments for correction of inflation, the trade unions called for another general strike in July, 1987 (July 9, 1987, Brazil Report).

# Summary of the Early Sarney Administration, 1985 to 1987

Inflation rates reached historic proportions under the Sarney government. Even when Kubitschek was building Brasília, in the years of Joao Goulart or during the Figueiredo years (when it reached 234.1%), the inflation rates did not even come close to that during Sarney's years. Inflation reached 365.9% by March of 1985 and it continued to climb throughout his administration. The Sarney administration froze prices and salaries twice. After the failure of the two economic plans, Sarney declared a moratorium on the external debt in 1987.

Despite the transition to civilian rule, the tensions between government and labor remained unresolved. The economic situation worsened and labor activity heightened. In response to this increasing tension, there was a cleavage in the labor movement making the active labor front stand in increasingly greater contrast to the conciliatory segment of the labor front. The next section describes how this split in the labor movement developed.

# Changes in Labor Leaders in Three Major Unions

During the 1980s in Brazil, major realignments have taken place within the labor movement centered in São Paulo. During the fieldwork period (1983 and 1984), a new labor confederation called the *Central Unica* (CUT) was founded by the PT. The founding of this confederation was evidence of the growth in the new militant front in labor politics. There was some evidence of the influence of this new confederation during the early Sarney years. In the late 1980s, the PT and CUT alliance within the labor movement continued to compete with a more established labor alliance centered around the Metalworkers' Union of São Paulo and an older confederation, the CGT.

In 1986, the general workers confederation, the CGT (Central Geral dos Trabalhadores), finally gained legal recognition. Joaquim(zao) dos Santos Andrade, former president of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union, became the new president of the confederation. Joaquimzao has been a major figure in the labor movement since the 1960s and is a member of the "old guard" in the labor movement known for his collaboration with the former military government. The CGT has been an active force in labor since the Goulart administration, but has never before been given official legal status (August 13, 1987, Brazil Report).

The Metalworkers Union of São Paulo had 370,000 members by 1987 and was said to be the largest and most powerful in Latin America. It also had the largest budget of any single union, an estimated one billion cruzados annually compiled from the mandatory union tax. For 22 years it was presided over by Joaquim dos Santos Andrade (Joaquimzao) who used it as a base to set up the CGT labor confederation. He left to concentrate on the CGT and Luiz Antônio de Medeiros, a former PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) militant, became the new president of the Metalworkers' Union of São Paulo (August 13, 1987, Brazil

Report). It is important to recognize the distinction between this union and the other metalworkers' union, the Metalworkers' Union of São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema.

The leadership of the CGT confederation and the Metalworkers' Union of São Paulo have continued to collaborate with the government and with the managements of large corporations rather than opposing policies which continue to curb the real wages of industrial workers. This collaboration preserves the economic interests and the patron-client relationships of powerful CGT leaders such as Joaquimzao and Medeiros. Encouraging strikes, on the other hand, would cause the federal government to freeze the bank account where union taxes from the 370,000 members of the São Paulo metalworkers' union are held. These government controlled union taxes are mandatory and amount to one day's pay per year paid by each worker (Erickson 1970; August 13, 1987, Brazil Report).

The PT-linked labor unions oppose the labor strategies which have been employed by Joaquimzao and Medeiros. The new labor strategy exemplified by the active strikes led by the Metalworkers of São Bernardo do Campo since 1978 has been to openly dispute government control of wage negotiations.

The PT-linked Metalworkers' Union of São Bernardo do Campo gained a new president in 1987. One former president of that union, Luis Ignácio da Silva (Lula), left to become more active in party politics and eventually became the PT candidate for president in 1989. Lula's successor, Jair Meneguelli, left the São Bernardo union presidency to work full-time in the establishment of the new unified workers confederation, the *Central Unica* (CUT) (August 13, 1987, Brazil Report).

The success or failure of most general strikes declared during the 1980s depended on the level of cooperation achieved between these two major segments of the labor movement, the CGT contingency and the growing CUT contingency.

As the decade progressed, the CGT became progressively less active in striking and the CUT more active in response to the economic crisis.

The linkage between the Workers' Party (PT) and the CUT labor confederation represents a second historic change in the labor movement. Political party affiliation was prohibited by the Vargas labor code. Most labor militants affiliated with any political party were imprisoned or killed during the years of repressive military rule from 1964 through 1974. However, in the 1980s, many members of the working class and the middle class are openly participating both in the labor movement and in leftist parties. The labor movement in the 1980s appears to be beginning to escape the confines of the corporativist union structure designed by Vargas.

### The New Brazilian Constitution of 1988

The transition to democracy continued in 1988 with the writing of a new Brazilian constitution. For the working class, some of the most significant changes of the decade of the 1980s related to the revision of the labor code, that part of the national constitution which redefines the rights of workers.

# New Workers' Rights Written into the Constitution

The Constituent Assembly in 1988 voted to include in the new Constitution the following workers rights: 1) The dismissal fee required by any business upon release of an employee went up from 10% to 40% of FGTS (retirement fund). This clause was designed to promote job stability. 2) The minimum full-time work week was reduced from 48 hours to 44 hours; 3) Maternity leave went up to 120 days from the previously allowed 90 days of leave; 4) A new paternity leave was

established to allow 8 days off for the father when a child is born; 5) Retirees would begin to receive the thirteenth month salary which active employees receive. (The thirteenth month salary means that every worker automatically receives an annual bonus equivalent to one month's salary, usually meted out in March each year.) 6) Overtime pay went up to 150% of the regular pay rate rather than the old value of 125% (Veja, March 9, 1988; 7-8).

For the registered working population, this package has been heralded as giving the best benefits since Vargas' 1943 CLT (Consolidaçao das Leis do Trabalho). However, only one-third of the work force or twenty million Brazilians work with carteira assinada (a registered work card from the Ministry of Labor like a Green Card) (Veja, March 8, 1988:7-8). The rest of the work force have no legal rights to any of the constitutionally granted benefits.

Maternal leave extension significantly affects the work force. Women are 35% of the economically active population nationally. Five of 100 women have children each year. Paternal leave is estimated to affect 1 million men (*Veja*, March 9, 1988;7-8).

Public servants will have the same rights as workers in the private sector, including the thirteenth month bonus, a union, and maternity leave of 120 days. A complementary law will define which categories of public functionaries can go on strike. A public servant can retire after 35 years for men, after 30 years for women. Partial retirement can be requested at 65 years of age for men and at 60 for women (Veja, March 30, 1988: 44-51).

The new Constitution amplifies strike rights, but maintains the "retrograde, authoritarian and fascist" system of corporativist union structure (*Veja*, March 9, 1988: 92). There cannot be more than one union of the same professional category in the same *município*. Constitutional labor laws now prohibit federal take-overs of labor unions, but the union tax has been retained as inherited from Vargas. The

continuation of this union tax means that the federal government can still freeze the bank account of any labor union which goes on strike.

The Constitution also included several other important political changes: To end censure of theater, films and TV programs; to treat racism as a crime subject to penalties of law; and to end executive decree-laws. Earlier, if decree-laws were not voted on by Congress within 50 days and 10 sessions they would automatically become approved. Now, a provisional measure used by the president will be automatically ended if not voted on in 30 days (*Veja* March 30, 1988: 44-51). In the past, executive decree laws were a major means of controlling wages without union "interference." The Constituent Assembly decided against changing the existing national abortion laws. Abortion continues to be only permitted when rape has occurred or the mother is at risk.

### Public Sector Wage Cuts and Strikes in 1988

The year 1988 was an important year for advances in workers rights as defined by the constitution. The labor movement remained active in striking for better wages and benefits. New strike activity came from government employees in response to new public sector wage cuts in Sarney's 1988 economic package. Most government employees lost their annual adjustment for inflation when in April, 1988, to gain four billion dollars, the government suspended the URP (wage-indexing inflation adjustment). The government had postponed this action for three months fearing that such a drastic policy would set off a new wave of strikes.

The morning after the wage cut was announced 6000 public bank functionaries of the *Banco Central* went on strike. During the cabinet meeting declaring the new measures, a march of 700 public servants arrived at the doors of the building of the Ministry of Agriculture in Brasília and shock troops were called

out. By nightfall, thousands of public workers had gathered for a public show of solidarity in a demonstration in Candelária in the center of Rio de Janeiro. This action was organized by the two labor confederations, the CUT and the CGT (*Veja*, April 13, 1988: 18-22).

Lula da Silva of the PT declared in response to these economic measures:
"Over the past 20 years, we have had more than 100 economic packages and not one
of them has improved the life of the wage earners." (Veja April 13, 1988: 18-22)
(Em vinte anos, tivemos mais de 100 pacotes e nenhum deles melhorou a vida dos
assalariados). He also announced that he expected that eventually all sectors would
lose the monthly adjustments to salaries for inflation.

The constitution went into effect on October 5, 1988, and more public sector strikes immediately followed. Public employees struck to regain their losses in salary back during the mid-1987 inflation index freeze. The most serious strikes were in November, 1988 with *Petrobrás* employees and with the *Companhia Siderárgica Nacional*. The Petrobrás strike was led by the CUT labor confederation. It resulted in a 15% pay increase back-dated to June 1987 (*Veja* November, 1988).

# The Summer Plan of Sarney in 1989

Inflation ended at an annual rate of 993% in 1988 (March 19, 1989, Brazil Report). The Summer Plan introduced by Sarney in 1989 was an emulation of the *Plan Primavera* of Argentina which again targeted the public sector. As Lula had predicted, wage indexing to correct for inflation was ended for all wage sectors.

A currency change was decreed in the president's Summer Plan. The new cruzado was established (worth 1,000 old cruzados). This produced a 17% devaluation and made one new cruzado equivalent to one U.S. dollar. Although the equivalency was 1:1 on January 18, by February, the new *cruzado* was worth about 75 cents (March 19, 1989, Brazil Report).

The Summer Plan also included a freeze on the prices of 180 basic products for 45 days or more. Once again the shopkeepers pulled many food products from supermarket shelves in order to warehouse these products for future sale at higher prices (March 19, 1989, Brazil Report).

### CGT and CUT Cooperation for a General Strike in 1989

The main union confederations, the CUT and the CGT, called a general strike for March 14 and 15, 1989 in response to the new wage policy outlined in the Summer Plan. Middle class employees participated in this general strike because part of the plan called for the dismissal of huge numbers of civil servants. The general strike was successful in most of the country (Financial Times, May 4, 1989). Modifications of the Summer Plan were subsequently announced. The prices of 39 food and hygiene products were raised 8.2% and then frozen at the new level. Salaries were set to be raised 15.8% quarterly (Financial Times, May 4, 1989).

In 1989 strike activity was intense and the Brazilian government intervened with military police on one occasion killing some strikers. An infamous strike by Companhia Siderárgica Nacional incurred military intervention against the workers who were occupying the steel plant at Volta Redonda and several people were killed (New York Times, May 8, 1989). On May 1, 1989, International Workers' Day, a monument was dedicated in Volta Redonda to the memory of three steelworkers killed by army troops during the November, 1988, strike. The monument was blown up by a group called the "Patriotic Phalange." The next day, a steel furnace several hundred yards from the destroyed monument caught fire (New York Times, May 8, 1989).

Strikes reached 450 a month by May, 1989, double the number which had occurred in 1988. Teachers, bank guards, bank workers and subway workers went on strike demanding wage increases to keep up with prices which had already gone up 100% between January and May, 1989 despite a price freeze (Financial Times, May 4, 1989). This time the mass strike movement occurred independent of the two main union confederations, the CGT and the CUT. The demands were for pay increases ranging from 30% to 150%, but even these increases would not compensate for inflation which was forecast to reach an annual rate of 850% in 1989 (Financial Times, May 4, 1989).

The government introduced tough anti-strike measures in May, 1989, after weeks of strikes which shut down the ports, the banking system and several important manufacturing sectors. These strikes had involved over two million workers. In spite of the seven-month-old constitution guaranteeing the right to strike, the new measures in 1989 declared that the government could fire those in "essential services" (Financial Times, May 4, 1989).

# President Collor's Economic Inheritance from Sarney

The series of economic measures instituted by President Sarney between 1985 and 1989 failed to combat inflation and severely eroded the buying power of wages. The IMF agreed to accept only 4% of Brazil's Gross Domestic Product for the fiscal deficit in 1988 and only 2% of the GDP for the deficit in 1989.

The economic situation appeared bleak when Fernando Collor de Mello first appeared in May, 1989 as a new dark horse presidential candidate leading in opinion polls. He proposed a "reformist" (anti-corruption) ticket aimed at trimming civil service privileges. Prior to Collor's appearance as a major presidential candidate, a left-wing victory was thought inevitable with Lula da Silva and Leonel

Brizola leading in the polls (May 1, 1989, Wall Street Journal). Despite a major showing by the candidate from the new opposition labor party, Lula da Silva of the PT, Collor won the run-off for president in November, 1989. Collor's pledges to trim the public sector promised a solution to the economic crisis.

Collor, faced with an economy where prices rose over 1000 percent in one year, froze 80 percent of the money in all bank accounts for 18 months (Brooke, New York Times, April 10, 1990). Congress approved Collor's decree which abolished 23 government bodies and opened the way for the dismissal of 10,000 government employees. Some of the agencies abolished included the Brazilian Coffee Institute, Brazil's port authority, the national steel holding company, and one subsidiary of the national oil company, *Petrobrás*. Other measures introduced by President Collor to be voted on in Congress included cutting the number of public ministries in half, initiating a program to sell state companies, and decreasing import tariffs. Collor continued the moratorium on the IMF international debt service (Brooke, New York Times, April 10, 1990).

A coalition of four left parties opposed this economic package. The Socialist Congressman, Lula, a major spokesperson for this coalition said that this plan would place the Brazilian economy more at the service of foreign creditors, multinational companies and large Brazilian companies. This new policy similar to the policies of the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil would offer tax incentives and further lower protective tariffs to invite more investment from large multinational corporations.

During Collor's first few months as president, 311,000 of the 887,000 unionized workers were laid off in the industrial zone of São Paulo. Estimates suggested that 90% of the industrial laborers in that state were unemployed (Brooke, New York Times, April 10, 1990). Next he proposes administrative reforms including a lay-off of about 320,000 public employees.

### Conclusions

# The Invisibility of Women in Official Political and Economic Reports

From 1980 to 1990, organized labor continued to strike against executivedecreed pay cuts. Women's organizations in the neighborhoods protested against the lack of urban services and the unhealthy living conditions experienced by the Brazilian urban working class. In spite of continuing economic threats to both working class and middle class wages, women made gains in being recognized as important wage earners for their households and as political leaders.

The following periodicals available in the U.S. were used in this chapter for the 1985 to 1990 summary: Veja, Brazil Report (from the Latin American Regional Reports), the EIU Country Reports for Brazil, and major newspapers such as the Financial Times, the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. Very little was said about women's issues in these sources. Major media publications have focused more on formal political institutions from which women are excluded. They gave good coverage of the futile anti-inflationary economic policies which were implemented in Brazil during the 1980s and of labor strikes which expressed political opposition to these austerity measures decreed by the president.

The gender of the major political leaders and power brokers in the central government and in the labor movement was clear; they were all men. The gender of the rank-and-file participants in the strikes can only be inferred according to what we know about the prevalence of men or women in the industrial or public sector named. These publications generally did not report very much about the response of informal neighborhood-based organizations (i.e. social movements) to the great economic political and economic changes which occurred in Brazil during the 1980s.

These informal neighborhood organizations are part of the grassroots organization of the growing political party of the PT and maintain some connection with the PMDB and other political groups associated with ecclesial base communities. Here we find the growing participation of working class women, a story left out of the source material available through publications such as Brazil Report, Veja, and U.S. newspapers.

### The Importance of Women in Brazilian Social Movements

With the exception of the summary of recent political and economic developments (1985 to 1990) in Brazil, the rest of this chapter has presented political history in which women are more visible. I have described the manner in which the Vargas union structure restricts union activism, the rejuvenation of the labor movement since 1978, and the expansion of the women's movement in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s.

Examination of recent labor history and the history of social movements in Brazil suggests that working class women became increasingly more active as political restriction of political parties and of official labor unions increased in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. As the democratization process has progressed, both factory women and neighborhood activists have established their importance as "new social actors" (Sader 1988) in working class politics and social movements. The women's movement in Brazil has made a major contribution to the emergence of democracy by winning political amnesty from the military coalition in power in 1978 for political prisoners and exiles.

In contrast to the labor movement and many formal political parties, community organizations and social movements allow women fuller political participation. As Chapters 1 and 2 have indicated, women have been taking the lead in community organizations such as Neighborhood Friends' Societies and favela commissions. Through these informal organizations women pressure local government officials to provide better basic urban services for working class neighborhoods. Like the combative opposition unions, these women-led organizations have protested austerity measures meted out by the national government under pressure from the IMF. So far, however, neither the labor movement, working class community action, nor government austerity measures have been able to stave off the rapid decline in the buying power of Brazilian wages as inflation soars in 1990. As the accumulation process continues in this developing country, Brazil continues to manifest the social tension which accompanies an increasing polarization of wealth.

# CHAPTER 3 GENDER AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN BRAZILIAN CHEMICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL FACTORIES

### Introduction

In this chapter, I present the economic information which was gathered during my fieldwork in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1983 and 1984. I conducted surveys of both men and women who worked in chemical and pharmaceutical factories in that major Latin American industrial capitol. Two kinds of surveys were conducted: a macro-level survey and a small sample survey. The macro-level description of industrial workers in chemical and pharmaceutical firms in São Paulo is presented first. The smaller survey was conducted to gather attitudinal information. As a reflection of this division in my survey, this chapter will be divided into two major sections. First there will be a description of Brazilian women in industry and a description of the São Paulo labor force with a focus on the case of chemical and pharmaceutical workers. The second major section of the chapter integrates these descriptive data to discuss the increased work burden of the double day, the impact on these factory women and their households of austerity measures in Brazil due to IMF negotiations, and the corresponding rising cost of living.

The data presented in the first section are unpublished statistics from DIEESE (the Inter-union Department of Social and Economic Statistics) on wages of men and women in chemical and pharmaceutical factories. These wage data from a very large sample which includes 880 factories in the city of São Paulo show how much less women are paid than men in this sector of industry. The

demographic characteristics of the female labor force and the kinds of work women do will be contrasted with the characteristics of the male labor force and the kinds of work men do.

### Brazilian Women in Industry: The Case of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers

Como mulher, estou ganhando bem.
"I am earning a good salary for a woman."

Brazil is one of the countries in Latin America which has an established manufacturing industry for the domestic economy and has turned to export-led development strategies to alleviate the debt crisis. Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund continuously encourage export-led growth in Brazil. This export manufacturing stage which began in the mid-1960s represents the third stage in the evolution of the international division of labor in developing countries in Latin America (Safa 1978) and one which spurs the employment of women in industry even more than the previous stages.

# The Brazilian Industrialization Process: Vargas, Kubitschek, and Import Substitution Industrialization

In the first stage in the international division of labor, most Latin American countries relied on primary production in agriculture and mining and imported most manufactured goods (Safa 1978). The second stage was one of import-substitution industrialization with nationalist measures and protectionist legislation to stimulate domestic manufacturing (Flynn 1978, Bresser Pereira 1984, Hewlett 1980).

The first cycle of industrialization in Brazil, according to Hewlett (1980), was from 1930 to 1964. The dominant economic strategy during this period was termed import substitution industrialization (ISI). Bresser Pereira (1984) restricts this

period to 1940 to 1962. The basic idea which is promoted by import substitution industrialization is the stimulation of domestic industry to produce basic consumer goods rather than a reliance on imports to meet these demands. Hewlett (1980) describes this type of industrialization as largely unplanned, but dependent upon government incentives and upon private and public investment. Vargas and Kubitschek are the two Brazilian presidents primarily identified with the development of national industry through import substitution.

During Vargas' first few years as president, he attempted to compensate coffee growers for the disastrous fall in coffee prices. The purchase of coffee surpluses by the state created spending power among coffee producers. This resulted in maintaining internal demand among the emerging Brazilian middle class. Maintaining the spending power of the middle class market was essential to the support of domestic manufacturing. Domestic investment was attracted by the higher profits which could be made in industrial production to meet internal consumer needs (Hewlett 1980). During the ISI phase, products identical to those previously imported (sophisticated consumer goods) came to be made in Brazil.

There was also considerable self-conscious state intervention during Vargas' presidency. Vargas began to direct the economy by manipulating import quotas, credit controls and protecting and subsidizing domestic manufacturing. The state directly participated in production in the areas of shipping, railways, public utilities and producing basic industrial goods. During Vargas' second term (1951-54) and even more during Kubitschek's term (1956-61), there was more explicit and forceful state control and encouragement of domestic industrialization.

Kubitschek's election campaign stressed the need to modernize and develop Brazil's industrial economy. Kubitschek encouraged the development of domestic industry further by building up transportation networks. He also made public investments in the lagging industrial sectors of chemicals and metalworking industries. Finally, to ensure the establishment of the infrastructure required for continued industrial growth, Kubitschek created state monopolies in electricity and petroleum, Eletrobrás and Petrobrás (Hewlett 1980).

Both Vargas and Kubitschek also made direct appeals to private investors, domestic and foreign. Brazilian businessmen received liberal credit from the state. Foreign firms also received special incentives to invest in Brazilian industry (Hewlett 1980).

# Foreign Capital and Industrialization in Brazil

Foreign capital has been present in Brazil since before the 1930s and the advent of modern industrialization. However, in the early Brazilian development phase, when the major export commodities were sugar, minerals and coffee, little foreign capital was involved in these economic sectors. Foreign direct investment in manufacturing increased rapidly in the post-war ISI period (Hewlett 1980). By the end of the Kubitschek term, about one-third of Brazilian manufacturing was controlled by foreign capital. Kubitschek offered foreign businesses in Brazil easy credit, protection from imports, favorable profit remission conditions and improved infrastructure (Hewlett 1980:142). By the later 1970s, multinationals controlled 99% of the car industry in Brazil, 84% of pharmaceutical production, 76% of the plastics industry and 66% of the electronics industry (Hewlett 1980:143).

# Export-led Industrial Growth

While the earlier stage of import substitution required the development of an internal market, in export manufacturing, the market is external. In that earlier stage, the purchasing power of the middle and working classes was important, but to compete internationally in the export manufacturing stage, production costsprimarily wages-- are cut (Safa 1978). The export-led growth phase began in Brazil in 1964. The military regime installed in Brazil in 1964 began a policy of reduction of protective tariffs, elimination of credit subsidies to domestic producers, and increase in the price of public services and encouraging the inflow of foreign capital more than ever (Hewlett 1980). Also during this period, the regime began a deliberate policy of letting wages adjustments for inflation lag behind the rising cost of living.

During the so-called "miracle years" from 1968 to 1973, the highest manufacturing growth rates were recorded in transport equipment, machinery, steel, electrical equipment and chemicals—all sectors dominated either by multinationals or the state (Hewlett 1980). Traditional sectors (textiles, clothing, food products) remained the preserve of private national capital and grew more slowly. By the early 1970s a large part of Brazilian manufactured exports were in transport equipment and in electrical, pharmaceutical and plastic goods produced by multinational firms (Hewlett 1980).

Most of the jobs arising from export manufacturing are for women, who earlier had comprised a small proportion of the industrial labor force in the import substitution stage. As of 1978 about half of the one million women employed worldwide in multinationals were in Latin America (Safa 1978). Fuentes and Ehrenreich (1983) point out that multinationals invest in the Third World to obtain the inexpensive labor of young women; they estimate that in northern Mexico and Southeast Asia some 85 percent of the work forces of the multinational corporations are women. There is a higher proportion of women in the labor force in textiles, electronics, metalwork, and chemical industries not only in free-trade zones and border industry where there is a concentration of foreign investment, but in centers

oriented toward the national market and backed by national capital coexistent with multinational investment (Beneria and Sen. 1986).

# The Insertion of Women in the Labor Force in Brazil in the 1980s

The economically active population in Brazil grew to 43.7 million by 1980; of these, 12 million were women (27 percent). According to the 1980 census for Brazil (IBGE), 18.6% of all working women are in industry. And the censuses of 1970 and 1980 show that the participation of Brazilian women in industry is growing. The growth rate for women in industrial labor for the decade immediately preceding my fieldwork study was 181%. Of all economically active women in 1980, 9.5% were in commerce and merchandising and 33% were in the service sector. The composition by sex of the labor force in 1980 was as follows: 18.2% of all industrial employees were women; 33.2% of those in commerce and merchandising were women and the service sector was 59.5% women.

Data available from the UN Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (1985) indicate that in 1985 in São Paulo, there were 1,671,600 adult women (aged 15 years and over) who were wage earners. This number represented 82.9% of all the women surveyed in São Paulo in 1985. A combined 15.4% of the adult female population were heads of establishments or self-employed ("working on their own account" UN-ECLAC wording). The UN 1985 survey revealed that the percentage of women in São Paulo who were unpaid family members and not working for wages in any capacity was 1.7% (UN ECLAC 1985:105). The UN statistics also provided per capita family income bracket comparisons using the categories "lowest 20%, next 30%, next 30%, and highest 20%." Interestingly, the percentage of women in each of these family income brackets who were wage-earners remained relatively constant and ranged from 81.7% to 83.7%. The same generalization could be made regarding the percentage of adult women in São

Paulo who were unpaid family members. For example, in the lowest per capita family income bracket, the "lowest 20%," 1.5% of adult women are unpaid family members compared to 1.6% of the adult women in the highest per capita family income bracket (UN-ECLAC 1985:105).

While textiles is the single industry which employs more women than any other (58% of the work force in textiles are women), the chemical and pharmaceutical sector is also a major employer of women. Women make up 34% of the total 54,640 workers in chemical and pharmaceutical firms in São Paulo in 1983 surveyed by DIEESE, the Inter-union Department of Social and Economic Statistics (1983; See Table 2). Women were also strongly represented in the official union leadership of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union of São Paulo. Six of the 24 elected union directors were women, the largest number in any professional union in that city.

### Basic Ouestions Addressed and Data Sources

The present study of factory women in chemical and pharmaceutical firms explores the following questions: Are multinationals bringing more women into wage labor than are nationally owned companies? Does wage labor for women break down the dependency of women on men in the basic economic unit, the nuclear family? What are some of the obstacles to women's economic autonomy and to their development of class consciousness in this Brazilian case study? To what degree are women segregated into poorly paid, unstable jobs and saddled with the double burden of household responsibilities and factory work?

In order to explore these questions, this chapter will include an analysis of the types of jobs women are holding in this particular industry. Are they the most poorly paid and unstable jobs? Wage discrimination against women in Brazilian chemical and pharmaceutical factories will be discussed. To explore economic dependency in the nuclear family, the decrease of the buying power of wages in Brazil shown in a cost of living survey by DIEESE is analyzed. Further, the breakdown of the labor force in the chemical and pharmaceutical industry is examined in detail by defining the general demographic profile of my survey sample, and the types of jobs women do in chemical and pharmaceutical factories. Gender ideology is examined in greater detail in Chapter 4, but the present chapter will include some interview comments on women's wages and opinions of women working outside the home.

The material which will be discussed includes 1) unpublished data from a DIEESE survey conducted in August, 1983, on the distribution of men and women and their wages in 880 chemical and pharmaceutical factories in São Paulo; 2) secondary data from DIEESE, a cost of living study reported in February, 1984a; 3) a two week sample of contract terminations registered at the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union in São Paulo in February, 1984; 4) primary data from fieldwork interviews conducted between December 1983 and March 1984 at the chemical and pharmaceutical union headquarters in São Paulo with 47 men and 52 women who were union members; and, 5) primary data from field observations verifying the interviews with these factory workers.

# <u>Wage Differentials Between Men and Women Industrial Workers</u> in Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals

How many people work in chemicals and pharmaceuticals? What products do they make? What kind of work is done by women? Before going on to identify the companies which hire more women, here is a brief overview of the chemical and pharmaceutical industry in São Paulo. This overview was presented at the Chemical

and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union headquarters on August 21, 1983; it is how the women union leaders describe the industry themselves.

In 1983, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries employed about 54,640 workers. 11,737 of these workers are union members of which 3,050 were women and 8,687 were men. The products produced in these industries are assimilated into the internal market within Brazil and are also exported to more industrialized countries and to Third World countries. These include health and veterinary products, agricultural products, hygiene and cleaning products, tints and paints.

The types of medicine produced include birth control pills and antibiotics. Due to poor control in the factories, these products represent special health risks to the workers, mainly women, who handle them. These substances enter their systems through the pores of the skin and under the fingernails. Women who handle the unprocessed material in antibiotics often begin to bleed more freely when they are cut (Turshen 1984).

The special health problems which pertain to workers in chemicals and pharmaceuticals are the subject of special union demands by women and as such, will be discussed elsewhere. Other specific products made in these industries are cosmetics and perfumes, varnish, cellulose, explosives, acids, insecticides, fertilizers, glues, candles, oxygen and gases.

Women are more often present in pharmaceutical production and packaging. There are relatively few men in pharmaceutical companies, but some men are present to work in transportation of the products and in the operation of heavy machinery. The chemical companies employ more men and the relatively few women in these companies have jobs connected with the kitchen, packaging, laboratory analysis, and quality control.

The photographs shown in Figures 3-1 through 3-5 were taken at a new pharmaceutical factory opened by Searle (one of the multinationals which has several factory sites in the city of São Paulo) to illustrate the types of work women do. The three Searle factories in São Paulo were built in 1980, 1982 and 1984. Together these three factories employ about 1300 people. The small one where these photos were taken employed 110 people of which 70 were women.

Where are women concentrated in chemical and pharmaceutical industries?

DIEESE, the Inter-union Department of Social and Economic Statistics, sometimes referred to as the unions' "think-tank," conducted a survey of the chemical and pharmaceutical factories in São Paulo in August, 1983. That survey covered 880 factories and reported the wages of 54,640 employees. This survey was one of the first in Brazil with a full breakdown by sex in each of 42 wage categories and in the major subcategories (chemical and pharmaceutical) of that industry. The survey also made clear distinctions between nationally owned firms and multinationals financed by foreign capital. My analysis here shows that women are concentrated in pharmaceuticals and that they are paid the lowest wages in nationally owned pharmaceutical factories. In pharmaceuticals, women earn on the average only half of what men earn in the same factories (See Table 3-3).

The bulk of the women in the chemical and pharmaceutical division of industry are employed by factories which produce perfumes and pharmaceutical products. In the DIEESE survey, 11,629 women or 61.4% of all the women included in this industrial category worked in perfume and pharmaceutical firms. Examining further the major types of firms which employ women, we find that 3,082 women work in nationally owned perfume factories; 1,383 women work in foreign-owned perfume factories. 3,077 women work in nationally owned pharmaceutical firms and 4,087 work in multinational pharmaceutical firms. As Table 3-1 shows, both foreign owned perfume and foreign owned pharmaceutical firms are employing more men while nationally owned Brazilian companies hire more women.



Figure 3-1. Women's Packaging Work

Figure 3-1 shows a woman doing packaging, probably the single most widely held job among women in pharmaceutical factories. In the Searle factory observed, in the packaging sector there were seven men and twenty-seven women. (Photo: Márcia Monteiro Antunes)



Figure 3-2. Inspecting Vials



Figure 3-3. Inspection Station

Figures 3-2 and 3-3 illustrate the jobs said to be most tedious-inspecting vials for flaws, a job held exclusively by women. Due to potential eye strain, the women are rotated out of this room every two hours. In this Searle factory, 10 women performed this job. (Photos: Márcia Monteiro Antunes)



Figure 3-4. Washing Vials



Figure 3-5. Sorting Vials Mechanically

Figure 3-4 shows a very common activity, washing vials in the production section. At this small factory twelve young women and three young men did washing; the sector supervisor was a man. Figure 3-5 is a woman arranging clean vials which are empty for packaging. The sorting machine in the picture was said to repalce 30 workers. (Photos: Marcia Monteiro Antunes)

Table 3-1 Concentration of Women Workers Among the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Firms Which Employ the Most Women

Type of Factory	Women	Men	%Women	Total
Nationally owned perfume	3082	2120	59.2	5202
Foreign owned perfume	1383	3224	30.0	4607
Nationally owned pharmaceutical	3077	2138	52.6	5845
Foreign owned pharmaceutical	4087	5761	41.5	9848
Totals	11,629	13,243	45.6	25,502

Source: DIEESE, August, 1983 wage survey

Specific firms in São Paulo which employ the largest numbers of women in chemical and pharmaceutical production are: Christian Gray, a Brazilian owned cosmetic company which employs 939 women who make up 69% of the total number employed at that factory; Avon, a multinational which employs 630 women who are 45% of the total factory employees; Nitroquímica, a Brazilian owned firm which employs 617 women who are 19% of the factory labor force; Gessy-Lever, a multinational with 346 women who are 18% of the total factory labor force; and Bayer, another multinational with 345 women who represent 31% of the total number of people employed at that factory. Squibb, a multinational chemical company employs a large number of women (316), who make up 40% of that company's work force. Fifty-one percent (or 244) of the total work force at

Biogalênica, a nationally owned firm which makes both chemical and pharmaceutical products are women. And two other multinationals, Boehringer and Lepetit S/A account for a good number of women: 270 women at Boehringer or 53% of its work force, and 159 women or 36% at Lepetit.

The DIEESE 1983 survey showed that in the 38 largest companies in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, with a total of 27,332 workers, 9538 were women. This signifies that in the largest companies alone, 35% of the work force were women. Of the large firms in which women make up a significant part of the individual factory work forces, only six are classified as chemical producers. These six include Bic (pen), Biogalênica, Abbott, Squibb, Rhodia, and Basf (cassette tapes). All of the other large employers of women manufacture pharmaceutical products, perfumes, or cosmetics. When the chemical companies are contrasted with pharmaceutical companies, basically the contrast can be seen as between companies which hire predominantly men (chemical firms) and those which hire predominantly women.

### Do Multinationals Pay Women Better Than Nationally Owned Companies?

Where are women's wages better in relation to those of men? In types of factories which employ more women or more men? In foreign owned firms or nationally owned firms? In larger companies or in small ones? The data from the August, 1983 DIEESE survey suggest that there is little difference between nationally owned and foreign owned companies with respect to salary discrimination against women. However the actual wages paid by multinationals are higher for both men and women than are the wages paid by the nationally owned companies.

In Brazilian owned chemical and pharmaceutical firms which are 34.3% women, women's salaries average 65.9% of men's salaries. In chemical and

pharmaceutical multinationals which are 35.3% women, women's salaries are an average 64.3% of those of men (See Table 3-2).

Table 3-2
Women's Overall Wage Status in Chemical and Pharmaceutical
Factories in São Paulo

Type of Factory	No. of W	No. of Workers		Mean Salary (Cr\$/Mo.)		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Ratios	
Nationally owned	11,433	21,920	76,465	116,064	34.3%Women 65.9% Salary**	
Foreign owned	7,516	13,771	128,420	199,731	35.3%Women 64.3% Salary	

<sup>\*</sup> Cr\$ = Cruzeiros, the Brazilian currency in 1983 - 1984. The exchange rate for August, 1983 was Cr\$ 654 = U.S.\$ 1.00

Source: DIEESE, August, 1983 wage survey

These averages suggest that there is very little difference between Brazilianowned enterprises and multinationals in this industry in the level of economic discrimination against women. These figures are also similar to those for U.S. companies overall; in 1985, women in the U.S. earned 60% of men's salaries (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

Although wage discrimination appears uniform in the overview of the whole chemical and pharmaceutical industry, when chemical firms (which employ more

<sup>\*\*</sup>This figure is calculated by dividing the average monthly women's salary by the average monthly men's salary.

men than women) are contrasted with pharmaceutical firms (which employ more women than men), differences between women and men emerge. The salary differences are summarized in Table 3-3.

In foreign owned chemical factories which have a work force which is 28.8% women, economic discrimination against women is comparatively less with women earning 83.7% of men's salaries. In Brazilian owned pharmaceutical companies which have a work force which is 52.6% women and also in multinational

Table 3-3 Salary Differences Between Women and Men in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Firms in São Paulo

Type of Factory	No. of Workers		Mean Salary (Cr\$/Mo.)*		<u>o.)</u> *
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Ratios
Nationally owned chemical firms	2,908	8,815	100,090	126,848	24.8% Women 78.9%Salary**
Foreign owned chemical firms	1,430	3,530	183,642	219,308	28.8% Women 83.7% Salary
Nationally owned pharmaceutical	3,077	2,138	60,646	110,060	52.6% Women 55.1% Salary
Foreign owned pharmaceutical	4,087	5,761	110,929	201,358	41.5% Women 55.1% Salary

<sup>\*</sup>The exchange rate for August, 1983, was Cr\$ 654 = U.S.\$ 1.00

Source: DIEESE, August, 1983 wage survey

<sup>\*\*</sup>This salary figure is calculated by dividing the average monthly women's salary by the average monthly men's salary.

pharmaceutical companies which have a work force which is 41.5% women, women are earning substantially less than men, 55.1% of men's salaries. Figure 3-6 illustrates the clear positive relationship between increased concentration of women workers and greater salary discrimination against women.

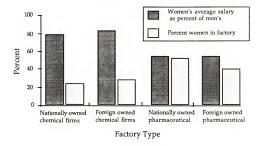


Figure 3-6. Women's Salaries and Concentration of Women Workers by Factory Type

While women's salaries relative to men's salaries within each of these types of factories remain low, comparisons of the actual average wage levels across categories yield other differences. For example, comparing the average salary for women in foreign owned pharmaceutical factories with those for women in nationally owned chemical factories; the former earn on the average Cr\$ 183,642 and the latter earn an average of only Cr\$ 60,646—a substantial difference. That is, women in foreign owned pharmaceutical factories earn an average salary which is three times that of women in nationally owned chemical factories.

Note that Table 3-3 shows that women in foreign owned chemical firms earn more than men who are working in nationally owned chemical firms as well as men in nationally owned pharmaceutical companies. The actual number of women in these chemical multinationals, however, is small (1,430) in comparison to the number in the other four types of factories shown with the largest actual number of women (4,087) being hired by foreign owned pharmaceutical firms where their salaries average 55.1% of those of men. In the fieldwork interviews when discussing their work histories, women made references to an industrial hierarchy, chemical firms being preferred by women over pharmaceuticals and pharmaceuticals over other types of factory work due to comparatively better pay scales. The historical study of women textile workers in the ABC region around São Paulo by Veccia (1989) identified a similar industrial hierarchy with women preferring the salaries in pharmaceuticals over those in textile factories. According to Veccia (1989), while adult men had better wage options in other industries, the comparative information on women's salaries in São Paulo suggested that pharmaceutical employment offered women the highest going wages.

In addition to exploring the differences between wages in national and multinational firms, the DIEESE 1983 survey examined the impact of factory size on differential pay levels between women and men. There were 416 Brazilian owned factories which employed 10 or fewer people and seven Brazilian owned firms employing more than 1000 people. As shown in Table 3-4, women are comparatively less discriminated against economically in small companies with fewer than 10 employees where all salaries are comparatively low. In nationally owned chemical and pharmaceutical plants which employ more than 1000 people, women are more discriminated against in their wages in relation to men, receiving a salary which averages 60.1% that of the men in these same factories.

Focusing on comparisons between women in different sizes of factories rather than on comparisons between women and men, only one difference emerges. Women working in firms which employ between 501 and 1000 people earn an average monthly salary of Cr\$ 127,487 while women in all other sizes of factories (except those with 301 to 500 employees) average between Cr\$63,718 and Cr\$77,518 monthly. As Table 3-4 shows, women in the larger firms have an average salary which is almost twice that of women in the smaller firms.

Of course the buying power of these wages is another important issue especially noting that the overall inflation rate in Brazil during the fieldwork period was over 200%. The minimum salary in effect at the time of the August, 1983 wage survey by DIEESE was Cr\$ 35,776. This salary, however, would be about equal to only the amount necessary to buy the food for one worker in September, 1983, according to DIEESE (as reported in *Sindiluta*, the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union Bulletin, October 5, 1983).

The minimum salary necessary for a household of four (a couple and two children) to cover basic food requirements, to pay rent, transportation and other basic expenses would be Cr\$ 220,477 (DIEESE cost of living survey for September, 1983). How the minimum wage relates to the minimum ration, to wage laws, and to the rise in the cost of living in São Paulo is the subject of the next section which focuses on the DIEESE cost of living survey (1984a).

# Age, Education and Marital Status in the Survey Sample of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers

The women interviewed at the headquarters of the chemical and pharmaceutical union of São Paulo were all union members, but they were not necessarily politically active. Men and women were interviewed while they were

Table 3-4 Wage Discrimination Against Women in Brazilian Owned Chemical and Pharmaceutical Factories

Factory Size (No. of Workers)		Average Salaries Women Men	Ratio of Women's Salaries to Men's (%)
1 to 10	72,045	86,930	82.9
11 to 20	65,181	93,906	69.4
21 to 50	73,821	106,391	69.4
51 to 100	66,256	95,809	69.1
101 to 200	77,489	114,521	67.7
201 to 300	77,518	125,630	61.7
301 to 500	90,119	140,276	64.2
501 to 1000	127,487	187,548	68.0
1001 +	63,718	106,000	60.1
Overall averages	76,465	116,064	65.9

Source: DIEESE, August, 1983 wage survey

waiting to see the doctor and the dentist. There was no random sampling; everyone who showed up on the days which the doctor and dentist provided medical services was interviewed until a sample of 100 people with an equal number of men and women was achieved (see methods described in Chapter 1). Though all of these people were registered union members, not all of them were active participants; their responses to certain questions on the interview schedule surveying opinions about union activity indicated that many only came to the union headquarters for medical services.

# Level of Education Among the Sample Group of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers

An examination of the education levels of the chemical and pharmaceutical workers interviewed shows that the sample is more educated than the Brazilian population as a whole.

Data from the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (1985) on women in São Paulo indicate that 13.2% of the total female population aged 15 years and over have no education. Another 40.2% of the adult women living in São Paulo have completed from one to four years of primary school only. In the interview sample, 19.1% of the men and 13.4% of the women had not completed primary school (See Table 3-5).

The largest number of male pharmaceutical and chemical workers have completed secondary school (38.3% of the men); 25% of the women have completed secondary school. Among the women, the largest number have completed middle school (26.9% of the women interviewed). Returning to the UN statistics (1985) regarding the educational levels of adult women in São Paulo, 14.9% have completed one to three years of secondary school and another 8% have gone on for some higher education. Of course these figures vary by region with São

Paulo being higher in educational level than most of the other states. Among the sample of workers in chemical and pharmaceutical firms in São Paulo, (combining those who have completed primary school with those who have completed secondary school or middle school), 76.9% of the women surveyed and 76.9% of the men surveyed have at least completed primary school.

The average salaries calculated from my sample suggest that this sample does not deviate significantly from the overall category of chemical and pharmaceutical industrial workers in São Paulo surveyed by DIEESE (1983). The table which presents the 1983 DIEESE wage summary is presented below (Table 3-14). Table 3-6 suggests that most women's salaries from the small survey which I conducted were in the range Cr\$108,000 to Cr\$122,700 (excluding the few university educated women). This range falls around the mid-point of the range from the DIEESE 1983 survey of the entire chemical and pharmaceutical industry. In comparison the DIEESE wage survey summarized in Table 3-14 shows that women's salaries in the chemical and pharmaceutical industry as a whole in São Paulo in 1983 ranged from Cr\$60,646 to Cr\$183,642. Table 3-6 describes the average salaries of the women and men in my interview sample according to education level and how the salaries of women compare to those of men.

These data on education level and salary show that the average salary for women remains constant regardless of education level with the notable exception of women with some university education. With primary education complete or incomplete, with a middle school education also or with secondary schooling, factory women earn between Cr\$ 117,800 and Cr\$ 122,700. For factory working men, the average salary climbs from an average Cr\$ 149,250 to Cr\$ 218,750. For women factory workers, education does not improve wages much, but for men, when primary school is completed they have a better chance of earning more money. The average salaries of the women who have completed primary school are 20% above

Table 3-5
Education Levels of Interview Sample of Men and Women
Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers

evel of Education	Men (%)	Women(%	6)
lliterate		2.1	1.9
rimary school incomplete		17.0	11.5
rimary school complete		21.3	25.0
iddle school		17.0	26.9
econdary school		38.3	25.0
ome university		4.2	11.5
`otal		100%	100%

the base wage established for chemical and pharmaceutical workers as are the average salaries of the women who have completed secondary school.

A study by SENAI (reported by Humphrey, 1983) in São Paulo showed that women in the Brazilian labor force are not confined to traditional office jobs, but are moving into production jobs. Women hold 30% of all nonadministrative jobs in São Paulo and 70% of the women in industry do manual, semi-skilled or skilled work in maintenance or production (Humphrey, 1983). The survey made at the medical department of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union of São Paulo in 1983 and 1984 shows that this overall pattern holds true for the factory women which have been described here. The salary levels of these women indicate

Table 3-6
Education Level of Factory Workers in the Sample Group,
Average Salaries, and Salaries of Women as Percent of Men's Salaries

Level of Education	Average Salaries (Cr\$/month)		)_ % of
	Men	Women	Men's Salaries
Illiterate*	90,500	108,000	119.3
Incomplete primary school	149,250	122,700	82.2
Primary school complete	209,400	119,350	57.0
Middle school	218,750	117,800	53.8
Secondary school	184,100	120,700	65.6
Some university*	170,000	286,000	168.2

<sup>\*</sup> In the categories of illiterate and university-educated, both for men and women, the data are insufficient to generalize. As Table 3-5 shows, less than 5 percent of the sample fall into each of these three categories.

that they are holding mainly unskilled production jobs or the lowest level of office work. Most of the women interviewed worked in packaging (36.5% of all women in the sample) and 11.5% worked as lab assistants. Other jobs held by these women included: secretary or office assistant (7.7%), chemical analyst, quality inspector, machinist, salesperson, cleaning person, general assistant, production assistant, telephone operator, administrative assistant, ramp worker, and preparation monitor.

The arbitrary divisions set up by Brazil's corporativist labor union laws are such that in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, although all of the workers belong to one union, there are two different base salaries and all of the workers in chemicals do not receive base pay adjustments at the same time. In pharmaceuticals, the monthly base in May, 1983 was Cr\$ 63,012 and for chemical industries the base was slightly higher at Cr\$ 65,319. The two base salaries which pertain to chemical and pharmaceutical workers changed twice during the fieldwork period. In November, 1983, they increased; the pharmaceutical monthly base salary became Cr\$ 103,680 and the chemical industry base salary became Cr\$ 112,560.

Some of those in chemical production received their salary adjustments in November and some did not receive a salary adjustment until December. Those who worked with the following products received a salary adjustment decreed by law in November, 1983: pharmaceutical products, matches, perfumes, cosmetics, synthetic resins, glue, animal and agricultural pesticides, styrene and plastics, and tints or dyes. The December, 1983 salary adjustment pertained to those who worked with the following products classified as part of the chemical industry: petrochemicals, oils, soaps and candles, alcohol products, explosives, paints and varnishes, petroleum refinements and distillations, insecticides and fertilizers, alkalies, pencils, pens, and office products.

# Age and Marital Status in the Sample Group of Workers in Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals

Among the interview sample, the percentage of men and of women who were under 24 years old was almost equal, 44% of the men and 45% of the women. For both men and women, this age group is the largest. However, as Table 3-7 below indicates, the proportion of women in the sample in the 25 to 31 year old age bracket is larger than the proportion of men. There are more men than women in the over 32 years-of-age category.

In the national statistics (RAIS--Relação Anual de Informações Sociais, 1979), 63.6% of the total work force, male and female, is between 19 and 30 years of age. Another 15.8% are aged 31 to 40; 8.5% are over 40 and on the other extreme of the age scale, 7.3% are minors and 4.9% of the total national work force are 18 years of age.

Table 3-7 Ages of Workers in the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sample Group

Age Range (years)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Under 24	44	45
25 to 31	20	43
Over 32	36	22
Total	100%	100%

If one compares the workers over 32 years of age in the interview sample with these national statistics, one can see that the distribution of women by age in the sample interview group is close to the national average of 24.3% of the work force (15.8% + 8.5%) over 30 years of age. The men in the sample group, however, are more numerous in this age category than in the total national work force.

The greatest differences between men and women workers in the sample groups are in their marital status. The majority of the women in chemical and pharmaceuticals are single (73.1%), while the men surveyed are about equally divided between married and single. The clear predominance of single women in chemicals and pharmaceuticals is illustrated in Figure 3-7. Table 3-8 summarizes the differences between men and women factory workers in marital status.

There appears to be a definite preference for hiring single women in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. One of the reasons for this practice appears to be a preference for women not involved in child care. Humphrey (1987) has noted this trend for industry in São Paulo as a whole in the 1970s and 1980s. This form of discrimination against women of childbearing age is one of the most common reasons for dismissal from chemical and pharmaceutical firms as illustrated in a union bulletin (Figure 3-8).

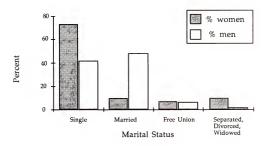


Figure 3-7. Marital Status of Women and Men in the Sample Group of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers

Table 3-8
Differences in Marital Status Among Men and Women in the
Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Sample

Marital Status	Men (%)	Women (%)
Single	42.5	73.1
Married	48.9	9.6
Free union	6.4	7.7
Separated, divorced, or widowed	2.1	9.6
Total	100%	100%

Humphrey (1987) quotes one recruitment manager in a pharmaceutical factory who openly admitted that the firm's policy was not to employ married women:

It is the Pharmaceutical Division's philosophy not to employ married women. The concern is not the marital status as such, but the dependants. We do not admit single mothers, although there are exceptions, when women hide the fact that they have children. They (the female employees) are not allowed to marry. If they inform their boss about it, they are dismissed automatically, (Humphrey 1987:80)



Figure 3-8. Union Bulletin Illustration of Employer Discrimination Against Married Women

In the figure, the woman puts a wedding announcement on the bulletin board. Her boss thinks "Next she'll become pregnant." Then, he tells her to "hit the street!" Figure 3-8 is taken from Sindituta, Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union Bulletin, January/February, 1984.

### Gender Comparisons in Job Stability

### Job Stability Among the Sample Group of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers

The most frequent length of service among the women as well as among the men interviewed was three to five years (42.3% of the women and 38.3% of the men). The second most frequent length of employment for women as well as for men was two years: 23.1% of the women and 17.0% of the men. The only notable difference in job stability when comparing men and women was in the number

employed six to ten years. Here men outnumbered women; 14.9% of the men compared to 9.6% of the women.

Combining all those who had been in their present position less than three years, women outnumber men, totalling 40.4% of the women in the survey sample compared to a sum of 31.9% for the percentage of men. Overall these figures suggest a high incidence of job turnover and the general consensus among factory workers interviewed is that three years is the average expected length of stay at one factory. At the three year marker, more benefits are due by law to the worker and many employers are reported to let them go at that time. The other time of frequent turnover reported informally is when the worker is just short of completing one year of service. Those who work less than a year receive no benefits.

#### Job Stability in Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Compared to Other Industries

DIEESE provides some data on job stability from all of the major professional unions in São Paulo for 1983. Summaries of total layoffs for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry as well as the other major industries in São Paulo are given in Table 3-9. Distinctions are not made by gender, but whether the worker requested the termination or whether he or she was laid off by the firm is identified. The total number of people laid off in 1983 was 154,221 up from 149,048 in 1982. The total number of people who asked that their contracts be terminated in 1982 was 27,270 while this number decreased in 1983 to 21,966. These figures suggest that job changes were less often voluntary in 1983 and that layoffs were increasing.

The records registered with the labor unions in São Paulo (reported in Table 3-9) indicate that there was an increase of 4.8% in the number of workers laid off in 1983. The sectors of industry which had annual increases were clothing (a 27.6%

increase in 1983 over the total for 1982), textiles, a 23.4% increase, metalwork with an increase of 8.8%, civil construction with 8.4% increase and glass, toys and smoking, 12.7% increase. The sectors which presented decreases included chemicals, with a decrease since 1982 of 11.6%; food with a 9.2% decrease; and graphics and paper, with a decrease of 7.8%.

To provide a context for this table, consider the general situation in Brazil regarding labor turnover and women's work as summarized by Cunningham (1983). The pattern for women is similar to that for men. Industry, commerce and services between them account for about 90 percent of all job admissions and terminations, with industry alone contributing 50 percent. The total number of job terminations was 6.7 million in 1976 which represented about 16.7 percent of the economically active population (Cunningham 1983:97).

According to Cunningham (1983), 61 percent of the job terminations were at the initiative of the employer. For women, this percentage was 56 percent. About half the cases of people dismissed had been employed for less than six months and 70 percent of the total (64 percent for women) had been employed less than one year. Using statistics from the IBGE 1981 industrial census Cunningham indicated that several of the industrial sectors which are largely controlled by multinationals have the highest proportions of job terminations namely pharmaceuticals, plastics, and tobacco (Cunningham 1983:99-100).

# An Analysis of the Dismissals Registered at the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union in São Paulo

With the overview of job instability in industry in São Paulo in mind, consider the following results of an analysis of the contract terminations registered at the

Table 3-9 Number of Industrial Workers Laid Off and Number Requesting Contract Terminations in São Paulo by Sector of Industry (1983)\*

Sector at Worker	No. Laid Off rs' Requests	No. Terminations at	1983 Total
All Industries	88,115	9,545	97,660
Chemicals and			
Pharmaceuticals	13,965	1,090	15,055
Food	7,748	1,054	8,802
Construction	12,770	597	13,367
Graphics, paper	8,687	1,355	10,042
Metalworkers	9,625	729	10,354
Textiles	16,091	1,654	17,645
Clothing	14,862	2,618	17,480
Glass, toys, smoking	4,367	448	4,815
Commerce	35,367	7,280	42,647
Service and transport	11,205	1,123	12,328
Banks	4.871	1,339	6,210
Communications	14,663	2,679	17,342
Total from all			
unions reporting	154,221	21,966	176,187

<sup>\*</sup>In this DIEESE summary, only those cases in which the employees had completed more than one year of service at the same firm were counted. These dismissals are the only ones which the companies are required by law to report at the respective professional unions.

Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union in February, 1984. All the summary sheets turned in at the union headquarters by men and women dismissed during a two week period will be analyzed here. For this sample of people whose contracts were terminated, the differences in length of service and average age by sex can be described. This sample is more complete than the data reported by DIEESE in that those people dismissed before completing one year of service are included.

Between February 1 and February 15, 1984, 44 women reported their dismissals and 137 men reported their dismissals from chemical or pharmaceutical factories. There may be some bias in these totals since fewer women than men have the habit or the opportunity to appear at the union headquarters to record their dismissal.

The average length of service for the women dismissed from chemical or pharmaceutical firms was 5 years - 4 months and for the men, this average length of service was 5 years - 6 months. So there was little difference by gender in average length of service in this sample. Humphrey (1987:174) also found in his survey of several Brazilian industries that turnover among women workers was not noticeably higher than for men. However, my survey sample did reveal differences between the averages ages of men and women at the time of dismissal. The average ages of those dismissed were: for women, 28.8 years of age; for men, 34.3 years of age. Humphrey's (1987) survey of several industries indicated that over half of the women had been employed between two and five years (54.7%) and 30.8% of the women in the survey had been employed for more than five years.

Of the women reporting their dismissal at the union headquarters, 23.2% had asked that their contract be terminated and of the men reporting dismissal, only 13.3% had been terminated at their own request. That means that 86.7% of the men were laid off at the firm's request compared to 76.7% of the women.

#### Job Turnover and Factory Women's Choices of Political Action Groups

Celso Frederico (1978a, 1978b) is one of the better known Brazilian researchers of the labor movement who has echoed the opinion of many male union leaders that women workers are only temporary employees and for this reason they do not become integrated into union activities. Margolis (1984) and Kessler-Harris (1982) have also cited similar opinions coming from U.S. union leaders regarding women as temporary or transient workers. The data presented here suggest that job turnover is high in Brazilian industry and it does not generally affect women more than men. A very large number of Brazilian members of the working class cannot participate in any union because they are unemployed. Also there are few unions which are actively opposing Brazil's wage laws and other government programs which bring severe economic oppression to the majority of the population. The interviews which will be presented in Chapter 4 suggest many other reasons for the lack of attraction which the union holds for women factory workers.

# Attitudes of Factory Women and Men Toward Their Wage Levels, Opinions of Women Working, Daily Work Hours for Men and Women

In order to elicit some opinions regarding their wages, the open-ended interview questions asked of chemical and pharmaceutical workers included were:

Are you making a good salary? Doing poorly? Earning a reasonable salary?

Among the factory women interviewed, most of them said that they were earning a reasonably good salary (44.2%). 13.5% said they earned poor wages and 9.6% were ambivalent, responding, *Mais ou menos* (more or less satisfactory). The women who thought their salaries were very good were 32.7% of the sample of

women. In some cases, these women described their attitudes toward their wages by saving that "as a woman, I am doing well." (Como mulher, estou ganhando bem.)

In contrast, the factory men who were interviewed were much more critical.

39.1% said that their wages were really bad (*Bem mal mesmo!*). Only 2.2% of the men in the sample said that their salaries were good while a substantial number (47.8%) said that their salaries were reasonable. 10.9% found their wages to be more or less satisfactory. They often went on to mention the amount of time they had worked in the factory or the value of the position which they held as justification for a better salary.

#### Opinions of Women Working

To learn about the opinions of women working outside the home among the sample group of workers in pharmaceutical and chemical factories in the survey, the questions posed were: In your opinion, is it good for a woman to work outside the home? Why? The most frequent responses of the women described the value of independence from men, of the development of women which occurs when they go out of the domestic sphere, the necessity of escaping housework. Often the women appeared to have conservative views of women working outside the home and expressed a conflict between the traditional responsibilities of women especially with child-rearing and the requirements of factory work. Note the comments of women from these interviews:

I think it (work outside the home) leaves a women freer, more independent of the man and more self-actualized. (Packaging worker, age 28, divorced).

It's good. Personally, it became an obligation, but it is important to have one's independence. (Laboratory assistant, 20, single)

I think it's (outside work is) excellent. A women inside the house follows the same patterns over and over; she stops in time. (Office assistant, 34, single)

(Working women) even become interested in politics. (Salesperson, 55, widow)

At home, I never get to rest, at the firm the work rhythm is easier. (Supervisor, 38, separated)

I think that working outside the home, people forget about their problems. I feel very good working. (Preparation monitor, 39, separated)

It's not good because the children will wind up being raised by others. On the other hand, it's good because you need to help your husband. (Packaging assistant, 24, married)

The women quoted above seemed to find work outside desirable because it gave them some economic independence and because they escaped the isolation of remaining at home.

The most common responses of men when asked about their opinions of women working dealt more with the conflicting responsibilities of women working and raising children and were sometimes protective of women, speaking of how women should not have to suffer the oppression of the factory. Rarely was there a favorable evaluation of women working, but one positive comment is reported below:

That depends. If the children must be left with neighbors, it (factory work) is not ideal. It is important for a women to help, but only if it does not infringe on this responsibility for the children. (Mechanic, 33 years old, married)

It (factory work) is not worth it for the salary offered to a women in the companies. Only if she has some university education. (Quality control inspector, 30 years old, married)

No. It is suffering for the woman, from the transportation problems to the pressure from the bosses. (Transport assistant, 20 years old, single)

The woman is very different from the man; she cannot work at strenuous jobs. (General assistant, 32 years old, single)

That depends. If she can only work at home, it is better but she must exercise an active role in society. (Packaging assistant, 22 years old, single)

I think so (it is good for a woman to work outside the home). The woman who works outside the home comes to have another vision of life as a whole. The woman at home is very inactive, watching television. (Cost assistant, 33 years old, married)

There is a great discrepancy between the generally negative perceptions of outside work for women as seen by men and the generally positive perceptions of women. Consider the contrast in two of the quotes presented above, the first from a factory man and the second from a factory woman: (Factory man) "The woman at home is very inactive, watching television." "At home, I never get to rest, at the firm the work rhythm is easier." (Factory woman) The opinions of men reflected the dominant Western ideology characterized by Barrett (1988) regarding women's roles. Women are seen as secondary wage earners in spite of their significant contributions to family or household income. As Table 3-11 shows, 36.8% of these women are supplying more than half of the total family income and another 34.7% of the women surveyed were contributing 40 to 59 percent of the total family income. In spite of the importance of the women's salaries, their primary responsibility is seen as child-rearing. Neither the wages nor the working conditions in the factories are seen by men as desirable for women (in contrast to the women's own assessments of wages or working conditions).

The ideology which reinforces wage discrimination against women can be seen in the interview responses from men and women factory workers. As Stolcke (1988) and Veccia (1989) have pointed out in their studies of other working class women in Brazil, the idea of women as dependent on men legitimizes their lower wages. As women extend their daily activities outside the domestic sphere to work in industry, a trend which has continued in Brazil since the 1920s (Veccia 1989), they face the demands of the double day.

In another paper (Lobo and Higgs 1983), we noted that women factory workers identify four main obstacles to the participation of women in the union movement. The first and principal obstacle which they name is the "double day," the double work burden of women charged with maintaining the major responsibility for household chores while working outside the home in factory work. Certainly we cannot discuss this double day without considering the other three obstacles to union participation by women which women factory workers have identified. These other obstacles are all parts of the traditional definition of women's social roles: the social devaluation of women's work within the factory; the opinion that men and not women are the principal social and political actors; and the demand that women bear and raise children. These barriers also contribute to women's subordinate positions in the factory. As supervisors, men are better paid and women are not given these supervisory positions due to higher educational levels or due to longer work experience (Humphrey 1987; Stolcke 1988).

The next section will go on to show how households are dependent on the low wages of women factory workers and how the exploitation of the social inequality of women intensifies the exploitation of the working class. Inflation in Brazil has become an increasingly grave problem in the 1980s especially for the working class. Brazil's IMF negotiations call for austerity measures and the president decrees wages which fall further and further behind inflation. The people represented in this study have no belts to tighten since the living conditions of Brazil's working class were already austere. As will be shown in section two of this chapter, even the worst salaries which have been reported here can be the backbone of the household budget, that sum of money which ensures that people can at least consume the minimum food ration.

Special pressures are put on factory women by the double burden of housework and factory work. The impact of Brazilian austerity measures on these

factory women and their households is covered in the next section of this chapter under the topic, the rising cost of living. Their unpaid domestic labor, sometimes called the "double day," is further evidence that these women are subordinate members of a subordinate class (the working class). The dynamics which have been referred to by some researchers as "patriarchal" relationships as well as their class position strongly influence the social and economic situations of these factory women.

#### The Double Day and the Rising Cost of Living

Nossa sobrevivência está em cima de nossos direitos. "Survival takes precedence over our rights."

In the survey sample of chemical and pharmaceutical workers, the following three questions were asked in order to find out about the work days of factory women and men:

How many hours each day do you work? Both outside and inside the home?

Do you do any other work to earn money? How much do you earn?

Do you think it is good for a woman to work outside the home? Why?

Hours worked outside the factory each day among factory women. Fortyfour percent (20 out of a total of 51) of the women interviewed said that they worked outside the factory. The average number of hours which they reported working outside were 2.55. Table 3-10 summarizes the types of work the women reported. Note that the majority of the women, though single, reported doing housework for periods of two hours and more per day. A good number also did extra remunerated service (26%). This large number doing housework may seem readily predictable, but middle class working women in Brazil do very little housework. Instead they hire working class women to do it. If the income statistics did not completely define the survey sample as working class, this housework information does so.

Hours worked outside the factory each day among factory men. Fifteen percent of the men interviewed (7 out of a total of 47) said that they worked outside the factory. This number is substantially fewer than the number of women reporting outside work. If housework were omitted from the women's work categories, however, the two groups would be about equal. That is, few factory workers have double work loads when it comes to paid labor. The average number of hours worked outside the factory among the men was 6.2 hours, but the number of cases is too small to have confidence in any generalizations. Likewise, due to the small number of cases of men working outside the factory, a breakdown of the types of work done would be of limited value. One observation must be made; there was only one case in the total of 47, a son, who said that he helped with housework (unpaid domestic labor).

Is housework "work?" The question designed to elicit information regarding the length of the work day was also designed to analyze whether or not women regarded work done inside the home as "work." After asking "How many hours do you work?" when the second part of the question was presented, "Both outside and inside the home?" 29 of the 52 women in the sample group (55.8%) had to change their answers. Their responses usually began, then, with an exclamation, "Oh!" and then they would recalculate the total number of hours they worked revising the figure upward by as much as 10 hours per day. Of course this extra 10 hours was not

all housework and the general rule was for them to add two to four hours to their original estimate. This pattern in their responses suggests that the majority of these factory women do not recognize their housework (which they call service de casa) as

Table 3-10 Women's Work Outside the Factory

Type of work	No.	%
Housework only	16	70
Cleaning, washing clothes, sewing, etc. for money	6	26
Coursework	1	4
Total	23	100

work (trabalho) and originally did not consider it valid in response to my initial question, "How many hours do you work each day?" This perception can be largely attributed to the fact that their household domestic labor is unpaid. Safa (1986) has made this same observation for women in the Caribbean. Women do not regard domestic labor as "work," in spite of the fact that particularly in Latin America and in other parts of the Third World, housework is indeed hard work. It takes more hours of a woman's time due to the lack of canned or frozen products, household appliances and even due to the lack of running water or electricity (Safa 1986).

#### Hours in the Factory, Women and Men

The average number of factory work hours reported by the unionized factory women was 9.5 per day. The average for men was similar, 9.2 hours per day. Adding together the average number of outside hours for women, the average total work day would be 12.0. Comparing this same sum for men, the average work day would be 10.1 hours.

The average monthly salary for women in the sample interviewed at the union was equivalent to \$90.50 in U.S. currency (using the exchange rates according to the dates of the interviews to correct for Brazilian inflation which was running from 200% to 270% between December 1983 and March, 1984). The range for these average monthly salaries in cruzeiros, the Brazilian currency of that period, was Cr\$ 129,600 to Cr\$ 132,000. These averages appear to be fairly representative of the overall category if we compare them with the DIEESE figures which show a range of Cr\$ 60,646 to Cr\$ 183,642 for women in chemical and pharmaceuticals in 880 firms surveyed in August, 1983.

# The Proportion of Family Income Represented by Factory Women's Wages

Considering wage discrimination against women in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries in São Paulo, we see that not only are women working longer hours than men when we take into consideration their unremunerated domestic labor, but they are also paid less than men. Women in these types of Brazilian factories are earning from 55% to 84% of the salaries earned by men, depending on the whether the factory makes chemical products (and employs more men) or pharmaceutical products (and employs more women) and depending on

whether the factory is a multinational or a nationally owned one. When we look at the contribution to the household income which these women's wages represent, we see the compelling reason for their willingness to work long hours even at these wages. As Table 3-11 illustrates, most of the factory women surveyed were contributing 40 to 59 percent of the household income (34.7% of the total number of women interviewed). For 23.8% of the women, their salaries represented 60 to 95 percent of the total household income compared to 34.1% of the men. These percentages are calculated by comparing each woman's salary with the total household income reported.

Table 3-11
Proportion of Family Income Represented by Factory
Women's and Men's Salaries (Percentages)

Proportion of family income	Men	Women
96 to 100%	27.2	13.0
60 to 95%	34.1	23.8
40 to 59%	15.7	34.7
20 to 39%	22.7	28.3
Total	100%	100%

Even though most of the union women interviewed were single (73.1%), their wages represent an average 54.5% of the total household income. These wages are not "pin money" for the women, but are essential to the survival of the

households in which these women participate. Because of the significance of their salaries to the survival of the household, these women endure harsh working conditions as well as obstinacy from the union.

#### A Women's "Sit-in" For Overtime Pay

One event at Christian Gray, a nationally owned cosmetics factory, further reinforces the idea that these women's salaries were indispensable to the households in which they participated. Many days I was at the gates of the factory to talk with the very young women on their lunch breaks. They walked out with powdery substances on their legs and arms which they could not identify. Over time I could see their skins becoming jaundiced and many of the women were showing signs of sickness due to toxicity. Most of the workers exiting the building would not even talk to union organizers who went there at lunch for fear of being dismissed. During the months I was going to Christian Gray to conduct informal interviews, several people lost their jobs because they had been *dedado*, identified as union sympathizers.

The Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union found the employees at this factory difficult to encourage to strike during a special union push to strike against working overtime on weekends. The contention was that Christian Gray, like many other firms, built up stock by having the workers, who were mainly women, work extra and then laid them off. In a last ditch effort to stimulate resistance from the workers, the 24 union directors set up a picket line at the factory on a Saturday. The union leaders attempted to barricade the factory entrance by linking arms and standing in the way, but these women frustrated them by climbing over the human barricade. On that day in the lunch bar across the street during the workers' break, one of the women from the union asked the women from Christian

Gray why they would not comply with the strike, even if it could look as if the union were responsible and not them. One woman replied, "Our survival takes precedence over our rights." (Nossa sobrevivência está em cima de nossos direitos.)

From that day forward, the union leadership refused to reach out to these women factory workers, declaring them "dead" with reference to their level of class consciousness.

Only one woman leader, the only one who was married and from the factory floor, continued to work to help these women organize. In November, 1984, they shut down the factory themselves, occupying the managers office in a "sit-in," and excluding the union from their negotiations. They struck because their overtime payments were not paid on time (Sindiluta, November, 1984). The prior insistence of the union that they refuse to work overtime was totally out of touch with their need to supplement their lower wage levels in order to maintain their household. As the data presented in the next section on the rising cost of living will show, a large portion of women's salaries is needed simply to cover household food costs. Also this incident and the ensuing independent strike illustrate the autonomous action of women factory workers, the bad working conditions under which they work which endanger their health, and the opposition which they experience in the labor union movement.

#### The Rising Cost of Living in São Paulo and the Minimum Wage Decrees

In the space of one year of my fieldwork, between March of 1983 and February 1984, the cost of living rose an average 185.6% in Brazil. During that year, the cost of food, the most basic item in workers' budgets, rose even faster at 214%

(DIEESE 1984a: 27). The impact of price inflation on various basic budget items for the average family in São Paulo is shown in Table 3-12.

### The Minimum Wage and the Cost of the Essential Ration

According to the DIEESE survey (1984a:41) the discrepancy between the minimum salary and the salary required to meet the basic household needs increased dramatically from March 1982 through February 1984. The cost of the

Table 3-12 Annual Increase in the Cost of Living for Households in São Paulo (March, 1983 - February, 1984)

Items	Rate for Households with Income under *Cr\$ 230,619 (in %)	General Rate (in %)
Food	217.9	214.0
Housing	165.7	146.6
Clothing	144.6	146.4
Transportation	166.7	174.7
Household appliances,		
furniture	161.1	153.6
Recreation		
(& smoking)	178.9	178.1
Education, culture	175.2	168.7
Household		
cleaning items	201.6	191.3
Personal Hygiene	170.2	171.6
Overall average	195.8	185.6

Source: DIEESE (1984a: 30)

essential ration is the figure established by law since 1938 to be used to calculate the minimum wage.

The minimum wage and the cost of the essential ration varies from one region of Brazil to another. This food cost and the way the minimum wage was calculated was discussed in union meetings. These calculations were used by the union movement led by the Workers' Party (PT) to defeat several wage decrees proposed by the government during the fieldwork period.

To show regional variations and basic family budget differences, the average prices for the basic food ration for six of the capital cities in Brazil are summarized in Table 3-13. This table reveals the growing discrepancy between the minimum salary as decreed by law and the salary needed to cover the basic family budget. The needed salary is greater in São Paulo and the workers' responses to this economic tension have also been more strongly expressed in the union movement centered in São Paulo (See Chapter 1 on food riots.).

The São Paulo prices are slightly higher than the prices in all other capital cities except Curitiba. If one compares the average monthly expenditure on food for São Paulo, Cr\$ 45,455, to the average salaries for factory women in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, one finds that a large portion of women's salaries is needed simply to cover food costs.

For women working in nationally owned pharmaceutical companies, an average monthly salary of Cr\$ 60,646 adjusted for inflation would be an estimated Cr\$ 116,925. This estimate comes from applying the overall annual rate of 185.6% over the period from August, 1983 to February, 1984. Food costs alone would then be a minimum of 39% of the household budgets of these women. For factory women in multinational chemical companies, those relatively better off among the industrial work force, that average salary of Cr\$ 183,642 adjusted for inflation would

In Six Brazilian Capital Cities (February, 1984) Average Cost of the Basic Food Ration Table 3-13

		Avera	ge Cost* in Cap	Average Cost* in Capital Cities (in Cr\$)	(\$	
Food Product	Belo Horizonte	Curitiba	Porto Alegre	Rio de Janeiro	Salvador	São Paulo
Meat	2,534	2,866	2,755	2,610	2,547	2,822
Milk	272	250	250	272	250	250
Beans	1,421	450	533	501	1,128	1,223
Rice	202	258	209	510	469	574
Farinha (1)	315	221	231	236	450	340
Potatoes (2)	334	294	328	315	•	383
Tomato	325	214	238	320	413	383
Bread	682	641	574	289	999	649
Coffee	2,035	2,369	2,359	2,363	2,374	2,439
Bananas (3)	330	258	617	232	314	392
Sugar	. 301	305	326	302	368	303
Oil	2,201	1,717	2,327	2,573	1,900	2,568
Butter	2,134	2,531	2,213	2,086	2,190	2,714
Monthly Expense	42,495	40,076	42,672	38,284	37,264	45,455
Work Time (hours)	178.5	168.25	179.25	161	178	191
Minimum Salary	57,120	57,120	57,120	57,120	50,256	57,120

The average costs of the products refer to one kilogram, one liter, and one dozen.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Work time is the hours which a worker at minimum salary would need to work to pay for the essential ration (Decree-law No. 399, April 30, 1938).

<sup>(2)</sup> The essential ration in the Northwest does not include polatoes. Late (3) In Porto Allegre, the price or oranges was included instead of (1) Manioc in the Northwest; wheat, farinha in the other regions.

bananas.

be Cr\$ 354,062. For these factory women, minimum food costs would be a more feasible 12.8% of the household budget.

The minimum salary unit (MSU) in August, 1983, the time of the DIEESE wage survey in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, was Cr\$ 34,776 for the south and southeast regions which include São Paulo. However, the minimum salary necessary to cover the necessary expenses for a worker and his or her family, as calculated by DIEESE for August, 1983 was Cr\$ 171,628.

Looking at the average women's salaries in the four major types of factories surveyed, only women in foreign owned chemical firms who were averaging Cr\$ 183,642 were earning enough alone to cover minimal family expenses. The women in both nationally owned chemical firms and in foreign owned pharmaceutical companies would be from Cr\$ 60,000 to Cr\$ 70,000 below this household survival level (about 2 MSUs below the necessary wage level). The women in nationally owned pharmaceutical firms would be even further below the needed salary. The Cr\$ 60,646 salary is almost 4 MSUs below the needed wage level. The salary ranges for women and for men in the various kinds of factories within the industry are shown in minimum salary units (MSUs) in Table 3-14.

### Minimum Wage Decrees, 1983-84

The actual MSU decreed by law for São Paulo in March of 1982 was Cr\$
11,928; it was raised, again by decree in May and November of both 1982 and 1983
until it reached Cr\$ 57,120--the MSU in effect at the time of the February, 1984 cost
of living survey. As Table 3-15 shows, the minimum salary increases do not coincide
with the increases in salary needed to satisfy the normal necessities of the worker
and his or her family. In 1982 and 1983, the adjustments to the minimum salaries or
base pay decreed by law in May and November allowed a cost of living increase of

Cr\$45,192. During that period, the monthly minimum needed salary increased by Cr\$232,087.

A closer examination of the salaries in Table 3-15 demonstrates that the biggest jump in the salary needed due to price inflation was between May and November of 1983. It was during this time period that popular protest was most intense. The first large general strike was led by the PT unions in late July and the people reacted with looting and sacking in the capital of São Paulo in October.

Table 3-14
Salaries of Factory Workers in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Firms in São Paulo in Minimum Salary Units (MSUs) August, 1983

	Mean Sal	ary/Mo.(Cr\$)	MSUs*	
Type of Factory	Women	Men	Women	Men
Nationally owned				
chemical firms	100,090	126,848	2.9	3.6
Foreign owned				
chemical firms	183,642	219,308	5.3	6.3
Nationally owned				
pharmaceutical	60,646	110,060	1.7	3.2
Foreign owned				
pharmaceutical	110,929	201,358	3.2	5.8

<sup>\*</sup> Each average monthly salary for this calculation was divided by the Minimum Salary for São Paulo of August, 1983 (Cr\$ 34,776).

Sources: DIEESE wage survey, August, 1983; DIEESE 1984a

Table 3-15 The Minimum Salary in Brazil (1982-1984) and the Minimum Needed Salary\*

	Minimum Salary	(Cr\$/month)	Minimum Needed Salary (Cr\$/month)	
Date	North, Northeast & Central West	South & Southeast		
1982:				
March	10,200	11,928	42,197	
May	14,400	16,608	47,433	
November	20,736	23,568	67,706	
1983:				
March	20,736	23,568	103,693	
May	30,600	34,776	121,243	
November	50,256	57,120	239,520	
1984:				
February	50,256	57,120	283,505	

<sup>\*</sup>The Minimum Needed Salary according to the constitution is that "salary capable of satisfying the normal necessities of the worker and those of (his or her) family." (Article 165)

Source: DIEESE (1984a: 41)

Although the November, 1983 MSU and the February 1984 MSU are the same, the monthly minimum needed salary rose substantially during this three-month period by almost Cr\$ 44,000. From a greater historical perspective, the rise in prices was such that the worker earning one MSU in 1959 would have to work 67 hours to earn enough money to buy food, while the worker earning one MSU in September of 1983 would have to work 244 hours to buy the minimum food ration.

In other words, while the worker in 1959 could earn enough for the month's food in less than two weeks, the worker in 1983 could not earn enough to purchase the minimum ration after a whole month of 240 hours work (with the legal minimum work week of 45 hours).

#### Conclusions

In this chapter I promised to specifically address the following basic questions: Are multinationals bringing more women into wage labor than are nationally owned companies? Does wage labor for women break down the dependency of women on men in the basic economic unit, the nuclear family? What are some of the obstacles to women's economic autonomy and to their development of class consciousness in this Brazilian case study? To what degree are women segregated into poorly paid, unstable jobs and saddled with the double burden of household responsibilities and factory work?

In sheer numbers, multinationals are of course bringing many more women into the paid labor force than are national companies. The 38 largest companies in chemicals and pharmaceuticals employ 9538 women with a total of 27,332 workers. In these large multinationals, 35% of the work force were women. More specifically, the relatively bigger share of the women factory workers are hired by pharmaceutical multinationals.

The question of whether or not this paid labor brings economic independence from men for these women is stickier. Overall, the consistent "gendered" wage inequalities documented by the extensive DIEESE data from 1983 on the chemical and pharmaceutical industries show that these women would be very hard put to support a household single-handedly on their salaries. Since women were earning about 60% of the average men's wages in the same factories, I would suggest instead that economic dependency and inequality is being reinforced by the industrial salary structure. Safa (1983:1) has said, "it is not just whether women work or not, but the reasons why they work and the kind of work they do which conditions the effect of employment on women's status within the home and the larger society." Studies of middle class women in the U.S. could find the entry of these well-educated women into paid labor to be liberating. However, the great majority of working women in the U.S. are still forced to work out of economic need, either to supplement inadequate wages of husbands or to support their families entirely.

Returning to the theoretical premises at the beginning of this chapter, three obstacles to women's economic autonomy and to their development of class consciousness as workers have been confirmed for this case study of Brazilian factory workers: 1) the segregation of women into the most poorly paid jobs; 2) the burden of the "double day;" and 3) the ideology that women are secondary wage earners. The increasing involvement of women in industry in this Latin American industrial center is indisputable. Women comprise 18.2% of the total industrial labor force in Brazil in the 1980s and in this particular industry, women are 34% of the labor force. Not only is there is a substantial number of women in chemical and pharmaceutical industry but the evidence is that "women are there to stay" (Lobo et al. 1989) The women are not being laid off during times of economic crisis like an

industrial reserve labor force, but instead they seem to be a growing part of the labor force in the 1980s.

Finally, to the question of whether job segregation by sex is occurring, clearly women are being maintained in the lowest paid jobs. There is labor segregation and wage discrimination by sex. Women are concentrated in pharmaceuticals where the average pay of men and women is lower when compared to chemical companies. In these pharmaceutical factories, women

receive an average salary which is about two-thirds that for men. Neither women's nor men's salaries alone are keeping up with the cost of living in São Paulo. The majority of the workers in chemicals and pharmaceuticals cannot cover even food costs.

These working class women continue to be subjugated to men in the household by serving as free domestic laborers. The nature of this "double burden" has been described very well by the factory woman who said, "At home I never rest. But at the firm, there is a better work rhythm." (Em casa, nunca descansa. Na firma tem um ritmo melhor.) The unpaid work which these women do at home has no "quitting time."

A type of gender ideology prevails which defines women as secondary workers even if their wages represent a large part of the total household income relative to the men's wages. In a historical study of industrial workers in the ABC region of São Paulo, French and Pedersen (1989) have also emphasized the influence of a patriarchal family ideology with its biological determinism and stereotypical assertion that women's rightful place is in the home. This ideology, they say, is shaped to fit the needs of a wage-dependent urban working class household. Such an ideology also serves industry by keeping women's wages low (Margolis 1984). The interdependence of the household unit and the role of women's wages in the maintenance of working class households has been analyzed

by Schmink (1986). When women work outside the household they and their male colleagues still refer to their paid labor as secondary. Their interview responses as well as those of the factory men generally suggest that women are still seen as working to "help" men. In this way, women's paid labor remains undervalued economically and socially. These women work outside the home without threatening the prevailing ideology regarding gender roles.

Although work in the factory means long work days (averaging 12 hours for women when travel time and household chores are added in), the women express a preference for it. They have described it as a respite from staying at home and as giving them more autonomy.

In spite of their segregation into poorly paid jobs, the double burden and the secondary workers ideology, the women say that they find factory work liberating in some respects. Single women who were interviewed said that factory work gave them some independence. This independence which they referred to in the interviews was not simply economic independence but freedom to be out in public also breaking with the traditional mores which confine women to the home.

The presence of women in the elected leadership of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union is evidence of their consciousness of themselves as workers (See Chapter 4). Six of the twenty-four elected union leaders in this case were women, the best representation for women among any of the professional unions in São Paulo. This substantial representation of women among the union office holders is a recognition on the part of the male-dominated union movement of the significant number of women in this industrial sector. But the nature of the political participation of these factory women is the focus of Chapter 4.

This chapter has described the situation of one group of working class women in Brazil. In pointing to both the dynamics of "patriarchal relations" and class relations as fundamental to the understanding of the position of women in paid

labor in Brazil, it is similar to a study by Stolcke (1988) of women coffee workers in São Paulo. John Humphrey (1987) has emphasized a similar point of view in his study of women industrial workers in São Paulo.

In this chapter, I have especially emphasized the enormous pressure placed on these working class women both because of socially ascribed roles which restrict them as women and because they are members of a subordinate (working) class. To assert themselves, as the incident at Christian Gray shows, these young women in the factories must overcome not one, but several related forms of domination--at home, at work, and in society at large. Wage discrimination against women represents, as Stolcke (1988) and Humphrey (1987) have suggested, the extension of women's subordinate position within the home and in society to the work situation.

Wage discrimination against women also is discrimination against a whole class of people. This has been demonstrated in the discussion of the rising cost of living and the rise in the cost of the basic food ration relative to these women's salaries. Low wages for factory women cut into household budgets which are highly dependent on their wages whether or not male wage earners are present. For all factory workers in Brazil during the 1980s, survival takes precedence over their rights. Such economic pressure may lead to radical political action as will be seen in the next chapter.

The degree to which paid wage labor breaks down women's dependency and contributes to their development of class consciousness as workers will be explored further through linguistic analysis of field interviews with union activists and activists from neighborhood-based social movements. Women's "class consciousness" as manifested in their collective political behavior will be explored in Chapter 4. It will be my contention in that chapter that the area of these women's lives which has changed most is their political participation. The relationship between work outside

the home and political action for women has been described by Elisabeth Jelin who says that women transform politics to include everyday life:

Until a few years ago, women in Latin America were a forgotten social category, invisible in the analyses, diagnoses, prognoses and even in strategic planning in popular movements. This oversight was rooted in the sexual division of labor and in the ideology that justified it, based on a gender distinction between the private, domestic sphere for women and the public sphere of economic and political life for men. Within the general concern for the subordination of women, the interest in their collective action stems from realizing that even when their culturally determined role is established basically in the domestic and private sphere, women have an important role in the public/political arena. It also stems from the realization that the recent shifts in the position of women in society involve a wider public presence and a growing gender identity (Jelin 1987: iv).

Women's entrance into the political life of the nation is transforming Brazilian politics.

# CHAPTER 4 A SEPARATION OF POLITICAL SPHERES RELATED TO THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR: BRAZILIAN FACTORY WOMEN'S VIEWS OF WORKING CLASS POLITICS

#### Introduction

Previous chapters have described historical perspectives on Brazilian working class politics in the 1980s and wage differentials by gender in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. Those chapters represent mainly the views of sociologists, historians, and anthropologists toward the Brazilian working class. This chapter will add the "insiders' " views, views of factory women and some of their political colleagues. Recorded interviews and published narratives are used to explore the perceptions of factory women concerning their socioeconomic situations and concerning political groups and political events of 1983 and early 1984.

Patai (1988) in her work on contemporary life stories of Brazilian women has pointed out the contribution to our knowledge which can be made by using ordinary women's descriptions of their lives:

Until recently the prism of androcentrism has distorted most of our knowledge about women, and the lives of ordinary women, even more than those of ordinary men, have been seen as unimportant, even trivial.

... our image of women is most likely to be formed from the representations of privileged artists and scholars, usually male, for it is they who have had greater access to the public arena (Patai 1988:1).

The first part of this chapter presents views on political organizations and events expressed by working class activists, mostly ordinary women. Sociolinguistic

analysis of the term *gente* (people) is used to infer some of the basic group identities among these women.

This chapter returns to the central thesis that working class women experience living and working conditions which differ from those of men in their class and consequently, they develop different political practices. The practices which they describe in this chapter reflect their own interests as a subordinate group within a subordinate class. Both interview data and fieldwork observations substantiate that living and working conditions are different for working class women compared to working class men. The second part of this chapter discusses the impact of the sexual division of labor in the factory and in the neighborhood. This labor dichotomy has produced a separation of political spheres in neighborhood and factory into areas of women's responsibility and areas which are the domain of men.

Often when Marxists talk about social class, it remains an abstraction. But in this chapter through the descriptions of working class women themselves, class comes alive. Consider the description of class presented by E.P. Thompson:

... class happens when some men [sic] as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men [sic] whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs (1963:9-10).

This definition of class, although expressed in sexist language is useful because it leads to a focus on political practices. Thompson stresses that class <a href="happens">happens</a>. People make things happen. According to this processual definition by Thompson, when women act collectively, they are creating events which constitute class. Class experiences come alive here as ordinary women describe in their own words their participation in strikes and neighborhood organizations.

## Sociolinguistic Methods

In the narratives which are presented in this chapter, the reader will note that certain phrases such as *minha filha* (my child), *puxa vida* (an expletive), or tag questions such as *sabe?* (you know?) are left in the narratives without repeated translation. Phrases such as these are called framing or keying devices by Tedlock (1983:288). They are used by the speakers to acknowledge that this is a dialogue between the interviewer and the group or the individual being interviewed. The literal meanings of these phrases are less important than their function as marking dialogue.

As further recognition that "ethnography is interaction" (Tedlock 1983), I have noted my own questions at certain points in the narrative. Patai (1988:17) also notes the significance of this observation by Tedlock regarding the interactive nature of ethnographic narratives in her presentation of some life histories of Brazilian women. A few paralinguistic features (gestures) will be indicated where they are used by those interviewed to dramatize some portion of their narrative.

# Women Working Class Leaders Describe "The People"

The next section recounts recorded descriptions by Dina, a coordinator of a shantytown commission in Diadema (one of the satellite cities of Sio Paulo), and by Carmen, a union director and former pharmaceutical factory worker in Sio Paulo. Both of these women moved to this heavily industrial region and after several years, became involved with the union movement and the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* or the PT). They have been chosen because they are ordinary women whose ways of life are shared by so many people from the working class. They both live in *favelas*, have about a fourth grade education and are recognized as leaders by their peers.

In taped interviews with these two women, occurrences of the phrase a gente, which literally means "the people," are analyzed to make some inferences about class consciousness. A gente is a term which has great appeal for an anthropologist since it seems to be a fundamental part of these speakers' identification of "humanness." The significance of the term gente has been poignantly revealed in a sign which was carried by Indians from the Amazon region in protest of government development policy in 1988. The sign said: "We are Indians. We are people. We do not want to be excluded." (Carneiro da Cunha 1989:22) The women speaking in the interviews which will be presented in this chapter appear to be saying, too: "We are Brazilian people. We do not want to be excluded in political decision-making." Like some of the Amazon Indians, these working class women are also taking action to become included in national politics. Consider, too the following line from an old samba tune: O pobre que nasce no morro é gente tambêm. The sentence can be translated two ways: "The poor person who was born on the hill (in a favela) is a person, too." or "Poor people are people, too." The implication is that we are all part of humanity.

The term a gente in Brazilian Portuguese is used inclusively. That is, a gente is a term which includes the speaker. The inclusive character of this term in Brazilian Portuguese stands in contrast to the term "the people" as it is used in U.S. English. In the U.S., the term "the people" is an exclusive term--i.e. it does not include the speaker. A gente in Brazilian Portuguese is often used instead of the pronoun "we" in everyday speech. This term is used more often by uneducated working class people.

In Brazil, there is another common term which means "the people"—o povo. O povo is exclusive and similar in use to the term "the people" in U.S. English. As will be illustrated o povo can even occur in linguistic contrast to a gente among Brazilian speakers. Perhaps a better translation for a gente would be "our people" as opposed to "the people." The linguistic parallels and contrasts (Frake 1980: 7) for this term *a gente* are used here to infer perceived social groups and to begin to explore the level of class identity of working class women.

I will be contrasting the social perceptions of working class women who are political leaders from neighborhood-based associations and from the union movement.

#### Women in Favela Politics

First, notice how Dina,\* (all names used here are pseudonyms) the coordinator of a *favela* (shantytown) commission, uses the term *a gente*. The following passages are from an interview conducted in April, 1984, in her home in a *favela* in the Taboāo district in Diadema, one of the satellite cities of Greater São Paulo.

Dina: When I moved here, there were three shanty houses. My godmother suggested that I build a shanty house. I was unemployed and had small children. I bought wood from a factory. The mayor took the materials when a few other houses were built. But we defended ourselves saying, I did it because others were doing it. That was ten years ago. An accumulation began and we began to form a large concentration of shanties in the *favela*. We now have 300 families, 300 houses now within this *favela*. There are 1,500 people according to the survey.

We, a gente began our political struggle three years ago. Padre Rubems from Santo Andre began grupos de reflexão, study groups.

This last mayor would not receive favelados (shantytown dwellers) in his office. A gente formed a group of 16 favelas, 16 representatives. A gente went to him in his office. He broke the glass on the table, he was so agitated with us. He said he didn't like favelados (people who live in the shantytowns). That was three years ago.

Next Dina makes references to the election in Diadema of a Workers' Party candidate for mayor in 1980. The national role of the Workers Party, considered

"Left labor" by political observers, was considerably underestimated until 1988. In November of that year, the Workers Party elected 35 mayors including the mayor of São Paulo, South America's largest city.

The new mayor of São Paulo is a 52-year old single woman from the Northeast, Luiza Erundina who helped found the PT in 1980 (Hinchberger 1989: 4). Erundina is well-known for her active support of *favelados*, the homeless who invade vacant land to establish *favelas*. Her administration was considered a preview of the policies which might be implemented by one of the leading presidential candidates in Brazil, Luís Ignácio da Silva (Lula), president of the Workers' Party. In November of 1989, Lula narrowly lost the two-way runoff for Brazilian president by only 4%.

Dina: It has been three years since this party came in, and a new mayor was elected, a simple metalworker. He was a man who had been unemployed. A gente, we knew that he was "a man of struggle," an homen de luta, from the union, always up front during strikes with the union. When "we the people" (a gente) created this party, a gente thought if it is the workers' party, he (this mayor) should be aligned with us (a gente). He said that one of his priorities would be favelados. We made the people (o povo) conscious, if he is from the Workers' Party (PT) we should fight for him. We, a gente worked for him. We already knew other parties and had no success with them.

He talked of urbanization, promising utilities. We, a gente had to organize, form commissions to get this. We started, we formed commissions. (In forming them, we told everyone that) it was not necessary to know how to read and write, how to speak well (fala bem) just have the desire to struggle, isn't that right?

We had a meeting here, finally we separated into eight groups and formed a commission of 24 people. We would have as our objective to bring solutions from the mayor, to go to him and make him aware of our problems in this *favela*.

#### Women Favelados: A Subordinate Group Within the Working Class

Next in the interview, Dina was asked: What about the composition of the favela commissions, are there many women? She describes women's participation as follows:

Both sexes participate, but I have an impression that the woman has a little more interest in it. The woman feels more in the flesh the problem of the favela. Because, you know, the husband gets up early and goes to work. Who has the problem of no water is a gente. The drainage ditch stops up and there's a bad smell in the children's noses, its us, a gente (who have to deal with it). With a sick child, who has to run to the clinic is us, a gente. So, the woman suffers more the reality of it all

We have three women in a commission of 24. Unfortunately, only six really participate and at meetings, there are an average of twelve or so attending. The three members who go to the mayor are the donast de casa, housewives.

We now have 200 or more shanty houses in fixed places. Twenty-six have electricity and water. Maybe next week (the shantytown) will get water pipes. In January, they began to measure (mapping the *favela* for urban services).

I have contact with the other *favelas*, eight in Taboāo alone, daily. One time per month, I meet with ABC 1 and 2, and São Judas. We are 136 *favelas*. We have a meeting for all in this region Sunday. We meet in Vera Luz (shantytown).

Dina rarely uses the singular pronoun "I" while she describes her political participation. The pervasiveness of the collective term, a gente, instead of any pronoun suggests a political identification which is fundamentally collective. This word choice implies that her social identity is mainly with others who live as she does, favelados (shantytown dwellers). Millions of Brazilians live in favelas in the urban centers where most of the country's population is concentrated and the number is growing. Accepting at face value the numbers which Dina mentions, if all 136 of the other favelas in her region were about the same size, there would have been about 204,000 favelados represented by the commissions which she describes.

At the end of the 1970s, one-third of the population of Diadema lived in favelas (Sader 1988: 136). A lot of humanity, these *gente*.

In the beginning of her narrative, Dina uses the term gente apparently in reference to her immediate family, describing how she came to live in the favela. She immediately changes to her primary use for the term to designate favelados (shantytown dwellers) as she describes how they organized themselves politically to receive urban services. She uses the term gente as she describes the relationship the favelados have developed with the PT (Workers' Party) over the past three years.

At one point, Dina narrows the group of people to which she primarily belongs to women favela dwellers only. She says women are the people who have to really deal with the problems of the favela.

The consciousness of women: an episode in Brasília. An anecdote related by Dina lends further support to the central thesis here: that *favela* women are subordinate in the working class to their male peers. Dina went to Brasília with a group of about 6,000 women for a demonstration in April, 1984, for the right to direct vote for president. There were 20 buses from São Paulo carrying about 800 women. Four to six of the buses were from Diadema. Government soldiers were encountered which tried to stop the buses from reaching the capital. Upon arrival, the group assembled outside the national congressional building. Only one congressional member, Juruna, a Brazilian Indian who was elected to congress from Rio de Janeiro, acknowledged and addressed this group.

Dina reported that Juruna said that women have more consciousness (consciència). He made a hand at the temple motion which Dina demonstrated as she interpreted it to the interviewer using the word consciència. "What do you think he meant?," I asked. To which Dina responded: "That women know they have to get power."

#### Working Class Women and the Labor Movement

Next, we will see how Carmen (pseudonym), the union director from a pharmaceutical factory, uses the term *a gente*. The interview presented here was done after I had spent several months participating with her in union activities. Carmen was given a list of questions in advance and she considered the list and the interview for more than two weeks before the recorded session. This interview with Carmen focused on the July 21, 1983 general strike and was conducted in August, 1983, at the union headquarters in the city of São Paulo, where she worked.

Carmen: Everybody (todo mundo) was getting organized, mounting the overall scheme for the pickets, and at 3:30 or 3:45 in the afternoon, we received notice that they (the military police) had entered into the headquarters of the bankworkers' union and the metro (subway) workers and ours (the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union) would be hunted down too. At that hour, I began thinking that the plan organized by the system is more organized than the plan of the people, a gente. They start with the principal unions, already putting an end to it, demobilizing the movement. I thought (to myself), we, a gente, take two steps forward and three back. Even we, a gente (the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union directors) had to run. We had to go there to the assembly and couldn't risk being in the headquarters.

We stayed until one in the morning and the following day, when I came by bus, it took four buses because the metro was stopped by the strike. I came alone. I wanted to check to see if any of the factories were stopped. I went to Vila Mariana to Christian Gray, the largest factory in my region. It would have been about 8 o'clock in the morning. There was a quartel, a real battalion of police—ROTA (special police known for their violence), police cars—near the subway. On all sides, it was full of police. Since I was alone, I looked around and returned, taking a bus to the assembly.

One striking feature in this description by Carmen is the clear opposition which she sets up between "the system" and "the people." The unions when they directly confront the police repression appear to be, in her mind, representing the demands of working class people. Of course the scene which she is describing that day in São Paulo is almost a state of siege in which there was an incredible police

and military presence to maintain "social control" in the city. Considering the rest of the events portrayed in this narrative, it is difficult to view the larger political context as one of a "transition to democracy." The events of July 21, 1983 accentuated the hidden military presence in the new opposition party-linked state government headed at that time in the state of São Paulo by Governor Montoro of the PMDB.

### The Strike Unmasks Armed Repression of the Working Class

The next portion of the interview with Carmen reveals what Tedlock has described as the evocative character of oral narratives. As Tedlock has stated, oral narratives evoke rather than describe emotions (as quoted by Patai 1988:17). She is shocked to learn that the union is not free to publicly organize working class people.

Carmen: I was revolted with the situation I saw. I said, *Puxa vidal* We, *a gente*, are just now succeeding in getting up and here comes all this repression on top of us and we fall again.

But I went to the assembly, and all these people were coming in who were hurt. There was all this activity, people coming from the picket lines, their arms injured by the police, telephone calls with the news that two were taken prisoner in Lapa, 10 taken to jail in Itaquera (see map, Chapter 1, Figure 1-1), a manifestation was dismantled I don't know where. All of that, in general, shocks people, a gente. You see, where is freedom? There is none! [Emphasis Carmen's]

At this point in her description, when she says "There is none!", Carmen stops dramatically, throwing up her hands, widening her eyes to look the interviewer straight in the eye. By this gesture she closes the first major portion of the interview and stresses the major message which she received from the general strike experience. "We the people" have no freedom. The strike functioned to unmask the repression of working class political activism by the state.

Next Carmen was asked how many people were in the assembly and what she did. She responded as follows:

Carmen: Minha filha, (my daughter), there were many people in the assembly. 500? Maybe more, journalists, unionists, workers, organized groups, the team for a command center.

Until 4 in the afternoon I stayed, mapping the factories in the chemical union which stopped. I took telephone calls from companheiros (comrades) taken prisoner asking for a lawyer. I got hungry and very tired. I went home, passing by the Praça da Sê (the central plaza in São Paulo). Arriving there, there was another rigorous scheme of security. Police on horses, with dogs, trucks full of armed police. Two people could not stop together, you had to keep walking.

I stopped, analyzing everything coldly, and I said to myself, This isn't right, for us (a gente) to fight like this. Fighting without weapons, there's not much advantage to that, we have to be armed to fight. This business of fighting only with the tongue, the voice, the gogô, (a slang term for voice-box, a word of African, possibly Yoruba origin) only the bare arm nothing more. I thought no! a gente must fight armed. What I felt at that hour looking at all those soldiers, who were not even letting persons sit down in the plaza without ordering them to stand up, I thought at that hour, it's not valid; for us, a gente, to fight without weapons is not valid. [Here Carmen is shaking her head "no." for emphasis! And I continue to think so. [Emphasis Carmen's]

To learn more about women's activities during the July general strike,

Carmen was asked: Where were women and men in the assembly?

Carmen: There were lots of women. Journalists, men and women . . . There were women lawyers and men lawyers and deputados, (the lowest level of elected city official), men and women. In that instant, all were equal, men and women. The woman factory worker was not there, only a very small number. It was the women who are up front (in political movements)--deputies, unionists--these types of women there. There would have been me and two or three others who at least looked like factory operatives (operarias).

#### A Separation Between Factory Workers and Union Leadership

Carmen will give her critique of the strike organization and union leadership in the next passage. From her standpoint, the July general strike was not a grassroots effort, but was imposed from above. This is strong criticism.

Carmen: There has been little participation by factory workers, men or women. I mean in the strike. The participation was more the (known political) groups, the leadership. It was a strike made.. from the top down.

In general, the workers say the strike doesn't get us anything but taken prisoner, beaten and injured. They are very fearful of the repression with the police reaction. They watch TV and see workers beaten in the street. I saw them hitting people on the head with their clubs.

Carmen clarifies her criticism of the role of union leaders in the July 21 general strike in the following passage. She was asked: If you could recommend changes to improve a general strike, what would you do differently?

Carmen: Digo o seguinte. I say the following. What you really have to change. The worker must assume responsibility for the strike. He is involved in the factory only, nothing more is valid. The strike they say will not solve their problems, the union won't. They don't know which way to take, the situation is so bad.

I, as a trabalhadora de fábrica, (a woman worker from the factory) I headed a strike in my firm, I know its not easy. The strike, and they are not all victorious, many times they are weak, but it is one weapon that a gente have. But to come out with a victorious strike, not a fracasso (a slang term for a display of weakness), you must have the participation of the worker (trabalhador), of all the masses, I am saving a povo mesmo, the people themselves.

Because making a strike from the cipula (control tower), only unionists declaring a strike, from the four points of the city, it's not valid. A movement which is victorious doesn't come out of that because the worker did not participate in the process. In general he does not participate. This is the truth, there is no use in high tower unionists, or confederations, or whatever else declaring a general strike, if the worker in the factory is not assuming responsibility and opposes the strike. [Emphasis Carmen's]

As she says "This is the truth," Carmen is slowly striking the table making a chopping motion with her hand. She continues this gesture which marks the climax of the recorded interview session. It was as if she were saying, "Pay attention: This is the point I wish to make to your audience."

Carmen: To improve the strike, and it won't be the second one or the third one (and the second one is being planned now), the victorious strike will only be the day that the worker himself inside the factory assumes the movement to go forward. He must assume responsibility, and do it, using the union leadership only to coordinate, nothing more. He must take up his own fight. Otherwise, it won't happen.

Gente who are "peons of the factory." Throughout this narrative, Carmen primarily uses the term gente to identify people confronting the system of political repression in Brazil. The term always occurs when she describes confrontations with federal police during the general strike. We see that "the system" is represented in the streets on the day of the general strike by federal police. Sometimes she uses gente to refer specifically to the union in which she participates as a director. More typically, she contrasts "we the people" with federal police. She says "our people" are just now getting organized and here comes all this repression. It shocks us, where is our freedom? Her view is a radical political view---"we the people" must arm ourselves against the system.

Her description of the failure of the strike due to the lack of support from the factory workers also suggests that Carmen views herself as separate from the labor movement leadership. She spoke to the interviewer as someone who might convey her criticisms to a broader audience, to the elites of the labor movement. In other conversations she contrasted those running the labor movement with her primary social group which she referred to as "peons of the factory."

In numerous conversations, Carmen referred to herself as a factory "peon" and she described this status as setting her apart from some of the other leaders in the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Union. She told about two "bourgeois women" coming to her house one night in 1982 to invite her to become a part of their new slate of union candidates. She also indicated that the president of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Union was not a "peon" since he had previously held a "high paid" management position in a multinational company in Diadema.

## Some Political Implications of "We the People"

The ways in which each of these women use the term a gente suggest that they see themselves as part of a working class with its own interests. Further, the ways in which these women have described events suggests that the interests of "the people" stand in opposition to the government.

In her description of the general strike, Carmen sees no special role for women, but Dina describes some differences for men and women. Because women feel the problems of the *favela* more, women's participation appears central in that political work. Carmen points out that there is, conversely, a very small number of factory women involved in the union movement.

Dina mentions a political party, the Workers' Party, while Carmen stresses instead an affinity with the union movement to articulate these interests. However, the union in which Carmen was a director was associated with the Workers' Party or PT as was the July general strike. Since the time of these interviews, the PT has become much more important in national politics and the first woman governor of the state of São Paulo was recently elected from that party. This party has a reputation for being a "women's party" and for being more of a grass-roots party. The Workers' Party emerged from the union movement and became involved with social movements articulated through neighborhood organizations such as favela commissions.

These women perceive themselves as belonging to two primary social groups: shantytown dwellers and factory workers. One social identity relates to place of residence and one is based on the workplace. These groups make their demands known by occupying the mayor's office or by participating in street manifestations such as the general strike. Sometimes the conflict between these groups and the government is shocking, as when battalions of federal police beat them in the streets and arrest them. Sometimes the people are only confronted with a mayor who breaks the glass pounding on his desk because women *favela* dwellers have occupied his office. In response to state opposition we see collective action and a clear resolve on the part of women such as these to act as leaders among the working class.

#### Political Options for Working Class Women

Beyond the inferences regarding perceived social groups, both of these narratives reveal some antagonisms between the existing political institutions and the needs of their groups. One notes an antagonism not only between "the system" and people of the working class, but between working class-based groups and so-called "opposition union groups" or parties such as the PT. Carmen in her narrative, especially, reveals a growing alienation from the chemical and pharmaceutical union, an opposition union in which she even holds a formal position as one of the directors. The strike was imposed from the top down and the workers did not benefit, she says.

More about the alienation which factory women experience in the union is detailed below in the last part of the chapter on the division of labor in the factory. The next section continues with descriptions of the women themselves, revealing other political options for working class women rather than the union or the

Workers' Party. The two political options which will be explored are neighborhood associations and the Central Union movement (C.U.T.).

First, a group interview with the founders of a neighborhood association is presented. These people, two men and two women, describe the connections between union groups and neighborhood groups, going on to describe the neighborhood organizing as more integrative than the union experience. As one man from the neighborhood group described it, after a strike, everyone goes home from the factory and leaves the "collective" feeling behind. And women don't participate much in the factory strikes. But the experiences of community in neighborhood association work continues from day to day.

Secondly, an interview with a PT militant who worked with the chemical and pharmaceutical union is presented which describes the attraction of the C.U.T. for one woman factory worker. Mercedes will describe her experiences as a young activist who has worked in the chemical and pharmaceutical industrial sector and with two of the union directorships. She concludes that the new Central Workers' Union represents more possibilities for broad social change than the established union. The Central Union (C.U.T.) would go beyond the confines of one single industry and union. Finally, she describes some of the social norms which she had to question in order to become politically active.

## Neighborhood Associations: One Political Option for Working Class Women

The neighborhood association chosen for study was called the Neighborhood Friends' Society (Sociedade Amigos de Bairro) and it was active in a working-class neighborhood in Diadema. Diadema is the principal dormitory city for the working class population of the revion (Sader 1988: 136).

Presented below are excerpts from a group interview with the founders of the Neighborhood Friends Society in which they describe its origin and political intent. The occurrence of the term *gente* will continue to be noted to examine the perceived social groupings of the speakers.

Members of the group assembled in one of the headquarters for the PT (Workers' Party) in a neighborhood in Diadema. I had been introduced to them by a PT organizer whom they had known for several years. The group included two men and two women. For the group interview, I asked them to describe the role of this neighborhood organization, to tell about their political and work experiences and to reflect upon their own political consciousness.

The founder of the Society was a slender gray-haired woman of about 55, Catarina,\* (all names used here are pseudonyms). Her daughter, Márcia, also a founding member of the group, was in her early thirties. Márcia's husband, Luís, was another of the group members. He grew up in a *favela* (shantytown) as a "street boy," and had been a long-time political organizer. Along with Josê, Luís had worked with the labor union in the area. Josê was married, with two small children and his wife was not present. She was seldom seen in public meetings.

Catarina begins the discussion by pointing out that this neighborhood group began with union work.

Catarina: The Society started the struggle for water service in 1979, at the end of the year. Now, when we, a gente, succeeded in legalizing the Society to carry on this work was in March of 1980.

A gente, we, got to know each other through the work with the Society in 1979. It began with friendships at work. It started with union work. They started their work in the union and as we started to know each other, we began to feel that we all had the ideal of struggle (de luta), of consciousness, de todo mundo (everyone). So a gente thought that this would be an ideal group for a neighborhood project, a type of commission. It was then, beginning with knowing each other through industrial firms, then we began to go to union activities together. We would see slides together and discuss them and this group emerged which you see today.

The *hairo*: far from factory workers' consciousness. Josê goes on to explain below why they feel that the neighborhood work has more possibilities for political consciousness-raising than union work. He makes an important observation—that collective identity has been limited to the time of strikes in the factories, but in the neighborhood there is not the division between workplace and home.

Josê: A gente have a philosophy which is different. For example, this companheiro (comrade) and I have a different experience from working in the factory. A gente struggle for example, go on strike. Then when this is over, we go home and leave that collective conscience and have an individualized view. In the factory when a gente feel exploited, we form a collective consciousness there and we go on strike which gives you an animated, spirited feeling.

In the neighborhood there is not this division (between the factory and the neighborhood), the place of work where we as workers feel a collective identity during strikes which we leave when we go home. This factory identity we unfortunately only feel when we are on strike. We now have a collective consciousness in the neighborhood (bairo). Lets say we make a strike. My work in the Society is to show that a strike is not necessary to have this consciousness. We can have it in the neighborhood (bairo). The principal role of the [Neighborhood Friends'] Society is to work in this realm, to make the worker conscious that he has an identity within the neighborhood.

The bairro is very far from the workers' consciousness. If we, a gente, succeed in getting this together, it will be a puta of a (one helluva) victory! Because in the neighborhood we can unite many different various (work) categories, understand? chemical workers, metalworkers, borracheiros (people who make things from discarded tires), donas de casa (housewives). . . .

One sees at this point in the interview the limitations for union organizing to which these working class activists believe they were responding. Organizing in the workplace in Brazil had been a political focal point prior to the time of this fieldwork project. A new political party emerged between 1978 and 1982, the Workers' Party, from union activity in the large auto factories in the São Paulo region. During that same time period, the Neighborhood Friends' Society was

forming. It was founded, according to Josê, in order to extend collective consciousness beyond the factory during strikes to the neighborhoods.

In the following excerpts, Márcia describes some of the ways that the neighborhood organizing experience differs from the union experience. Striking for better wages is viewed by these activists as often motivated by a desire for limited changes.

Márcia: This work of the Society is very slow, very long-term, to arrive at the kind of collective, a homogeneity which he (Josè) describes. It will take a long time for us, a gente, to get there. Because even inside the factory, the experience in the factory just as in the bairro, we, a gente, feel a certain difficulty in forming the struggle because the worker is not (politically) conscious. He knows that he is living in a crisis, in an infernal economic situation that . . . the money, grana (slang term for money, like "jack" in U.S. English slang), will not make it.

Many workers make a strike, a person can participate not with the idea that we the people, a gente, will take responsibility, go forward with a project and organize. No! Many of them are participating in the strike thinking that a 10% raise in pay will help, an individualistic way of thinking.

So the work of the Society is at this level, to try to raise consciousness (conscientizar). To raise consciousness for me is not just to eliminate the problem. The difficulty which people (o peasoal) have to struggle with is for an objective, an ideal, which is collective—to lose the individualistic way of thinking each one has. That is why it is a project which is very slow, principally at the level of the bairro where people, o pessoal, see the project as revindicatory (centered on immediate demands).

Immediate demands vs. political awareness. As the group interview continues, Márcia continues to contrast union and neighborhood organizing. Strikes for wage demands can still be a reflection of individuality and not a collective demand. Likewise, some neighborhood associations limit their activities to short-term demands and do not seek to broaden the political awareness of the community.

Márcia: In Nações (the name of the neighborhood), we have a Society known in the vicinity as a group of people (pessoas) who want to carry out a project which is different. We have a politics which is more

rooted and there are people here who have been doing political work for a long time.

We have to get this idea out of the heads of the residents (moradores). They think that the Society exists only at the level of making (immediate) demands (such as for utility services for the neighborhood). If the Society wants to invite them to a lecture, for example, it is difficult. We have to go to their houses and talk with them--This is the work of the Society, etc. So this is a project which is very long-term that we, a gente, have to develop. The collectivity inside the factory in my experience is not like this. The worker there is very individualistic.

The remarks by Luís suggest that he sees the neighborhood work as fundamentally shaped by women who, he says, have different feelings of community in comparison to the men who are involved with union organizing.

Luís: The woman does not participate in the union. I ask myself why?

Arriving in the neighborhood, I had this union experience. In the union movement, you feel a sense of history. Women within the family feel another thing, they will renew the struggle at another level. There is a collective spirit in things. This experience which I am living is different.

A "family tradition of struggle." To introduce the next part of the group interview, I asked: How did your thinking (consciência) change as a result of your experiences? Catarina, the acknowledged central founder of the Society, describes her overall political evolution as a progression from "the desire" to the "opportunity" to do something. Although since the time of her marriage to a revolutionary socialist, she wanted to work toward social change, it has only been during the past five years (since she has been in her 50s) that she has been able to formulate a community project.

Catarina: Can I start? I never had an opportunity to participate in anything. We did not have a union. We had one which was merely in name only. Even today . . . I am a seamstress, we have a union with some activity, now yes but in the past no.

But what brought me já (already) this desire to be a militant, to do something was simply my marriage to a revolutionary. My husband ever since I have known him has been political. He always had his revolutionary socialist ideas. And I never participated, but I had great incentive because he taught me many things. He reads a lot and he transmits to me everything that he reads. He works as a neighborhood guard now. Still he does this.

I read little, I don't have time to read because I work outside the home and I have my responsibilities in the home. But he reads everything—tudo que ele pega na mão, everything he can get his hands on, newspapers, books, bulletins, tudo (everything). Then at night, we, a gente, sit and he starts to tell me everything that he read that day. We still do this, it is a habit which we, a gente, have acquired.

But I always had the desire (for political struggle), sabe? (you know?) And I did not have the opportunity. I never had the opportunity. A gente did not know a group with whom we could fazer um trabalho, (do a project) sabe?

Catarina clarified to me in other conversations what she meant by a revolutionary socialist in this interview. Her husband was active during the period from 1936 to 1945 in the circulation of petitions to get Luís Carlos Prestes, the founder of the Communist Party in Brazil, out of prison. The party with which Prestes is identified is the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), not to be confused with another division of the Communist Party in Brazil known as the PC do B (Communist Party of Brazil) which advocates armed struggle.

Catarina: And only when my children started to work, they started to bring home books, and then we, a gente, started to sit down together and discuss with my husband.

One day we were in a group discussing, what do you all think? Can we do something? Let's do this or that, let's create this ... And the idea came to call together friends for a *churrasco*, a cook-out, and see what we can come up with. (Laughing) And from this cook-out came the idea of the Society.

It was from there, since then, in 1979 the PT (Workers' Party) appeared and we, a gente, were together with the PT helping with political work. And after that, I think that I, principally, besides knowing well ... It has been 30 years that I have been married but with little opportunity to be a militiant before.

But after my children were grown, we, a gente, began to participate in the union and other things together with these people (o pessoal)

(indicating by nodding her head those present in this interview). So we, a gente, created this project which is a sociedade de luta, a society of struggle. That is my story.

"That is my story," says Catarina, a cue to the next person in the group to tell his or her story of the founding of the group. Next in the interview, José contrasts his background in factory work with the family-based experience recounted by Catarina.

Josè: Look, I don't have a family tradition of struggle, understand? Because after living 20 years under a military regime which is oppressing everyone (todo mundo), a gente, perhaps our parents, not to condemn them, but they do not have this experience of struggle (such as Catarina described). So a gente raised in that rot that we have to work and everything will be okay, etc. That thinking of the real capitalist, nê? That mentality to just work. There is no collective sense.

After I started working in the factory, in the 1970s, living with the repression. A gente (We or I) began to understand. They indoctrinate us at another level, you have to work to produce, just produce. . . . On the day you begin working you begin to perceive that you are being exploited. For example, you work 10 hours per day, and you cannot maintain yourself. While the boss has 300 guys working for him and he doesn't produce anything. And you see that he has the money to travel by plane.

Seeing all this, you, working in the factory, you begin to be revolted by it and you begin to think. My parents worked their whole lives and it didn't make enough to eat. I'm going to do the same thing, I work and I can't even maintain my family. You start to begin to think. There's got to be something wrong here. From there I began to see if I could do something to improve the situation. I began to work with the union.

<u>Factories</u>, schools, <u>favelas</u>: different "first steps toward political <u>consciousness</u>." In the next passage, Josê reflects on the situation of the <u>favelas</u>, prominent reminders in Diadema of the stark contrast in living conditions of different sectors of Brazilian society.

Josê: I am a factory worker; I can have a car, and I can have this and that. I see favelas where millions of people work just like me and they don't even have a roof over their heads. Why? Because the guy cannot work? No he works just like me. Because he does not have the

conditions to study? Why doesn't he? Because the government itself, the system in which a gente live does not allow the conditions so that he can study, for him to liberate himself from these conditions. So the guy is obliged to live in that place where no-one wants to live. From there, I think a person begins to become conscious and to be useful to society. A gente fight for the interests of all, no? I am learning. For me this is very gratifying.

The contrast in backgrounds continues as Márcia and Luís describe the different experiences which preceded their participation in the founding of the Neighborhood Friends' Society. Márcia mentions some of the teaching she received from her father, who also is described by Catarina as her teacher, her husband who read everything and shared it with her. Then she mentions her contact with groups associated with the PT which began when she worked in the factory.

Márcia (Catarina's daughter): I think that every work of political consciousness raising logically starts with a group of people who are conscious, with ideas of liberation which seek more people to fortify the group. It was through a group such as this that I began to know politics, in a deeper way, about capitalism and socialism, this type of a group in the PT, working with this level of consciousness raising.

Independent from this, ever since I was a child I always had my father who taught me about history. He taught me how the history of Brazil as it is taught in the schools is biased, such as the story of the Indians. It is really a type of teaching which is falsified, not reality. Because school instruction is being given within the capitalist system where it is hard for you to find a teacher with the courage to come and say how things really are. It was there (in school) that I met these people (pessoal), ne?

Within the PT I saw the option of work with the Neighborhood Friends' Society. Within this party, I had a great experience because within a political party you see *correntes* (divergences). So you find all kinds of ideas. You begin to acquire various daily practices and you begin to see the reality.

For example, within a neighborhood group you see the discrimination against favelados, you feel this. You can find there a worker (trabalhador) with five children working and unable to provide the necessities. You feel this and you can feel useless not doing anything about it. There is so much space to do good things. Instead of watching TV at night or on the weekend, if everyone had this kind of idea . . . Everything gives you some experience.

Even my experience working in the factories (as a secretary). A gente feel something ... a worker arrives there and works 10 hours per day

for a salary which is a <u>disgrace!</u> He cannot even pay the rent... You see this won't do. In the Society, I learned a lot. Theory helps but daily practice is what really teaches you—the living of it. [Emphasis Márcia's]

Luís describes his introduction to political work as a homeless boy from the Rio favelas:

Luís: The process of politicization is interesting. I lived in Rio, at seven years of age. I had a friend, a public functionary, who woke me up. I had to walk an hour every morning to read his paper, a leftist group publication which he gave me, every day. I lived then in Petrópolis; my infancy was very hard. At 14 years of age, I was invited to meetings; they called me companheiro. I thought it was strange. I had always liked politics and I continued. When I got to São Paulo, I already had this experience in my head.

When you begin to work with an Association, you start to live the reality with the people. When you begin to move out of the union, you encounter problems which are concrete. You begin to deal with other kinds of problems.

People with other militancy have different formations, different first steps toward this political consciousness.

In summary, neighborhood organizing is led by women such as Catarina and Dina (the *favela* commission leader described earlier) who do not work outside the home or who do so only part-time. It involves people from diverse backgrounds who bring with them a great variety of political experiences which are not all centered in the workplace.

The Neighborhood Friends' Society began with demands for services (for water), as in the case of the *favela* commission. Having achieved neighborhood improvements, this neighborhood association went on to plan a community education center. They were in the process of demanding city funds for that project during the fieldwork period. They also participated in street marches with other neighborhood groups demanding water and electricity for the surrounding *favelas*.

# The Central Union Movement: Another Political Option for Working Class Women

While groups such as the Neighborhood Friends' Society continue their political work among the Brazilian working class in the 1980s, another way that the limitations of the existing union structure in Brazil are being challenged is in the founding of a new Central Union (C.U.T.). The interview below with Mercedes, a young PT militant, describes her earlier involvement with some community-based groups and her present union involvement.

Mercedes, in her early twenties, has some university training and has worked to assist DIEESE in surveys. She has worked as a secretary in several chemical and pharmaceutical factories, but would no longer be hired because of her union activism. I worked with her in conducting the union survey and had extensive contact with her at union and factory meetings during the last several months of the fieldwork period.

Mercedes was very reticent about giving an interview on tape. She was asked several times over a period of several months before the following interview was conducted. Her endorsement of the illegal Central Union movement in the interview may have been the principal reason for her cautiousness about giving the interview. President Figueiredo officially declared war on this movement for the C.U.T. declaring that he would use every means at his disposal to repress it, including violence. One difference between Mercedes and the other women activists who were interviewed is that she is not considered a leader. Instead she is often described as one of the "foot soldiers" of the Workers' Party, as a *PTista*.

I began the session with the open-ended question: Tell me the experiences most important in bringing about your way of thinking politically.

Mercedes: You got me, now. I would say that certain things opened up my mind. I did not have a militancy within a party or the union. I considered myself very independent. In the beginning, there were groups in the bairo (neighborhood) through the church, people who were activists and did not have church participation, but the church promoted their work. When I began to think about parties during the so-called opening up to democracy (abertura), people began to talk about the PT. We, a gente, had a mind turned toward that because it was the only identifiable group. A gente talked about the PT. I identified myself more with the workers and I began to be interested in the space of the workers, the union.

When? 1979. First I worked in the neighborhood communities, later the union. We did not understand the union movement much when we began.

What opened up my mind, my vision, I began to see things that I couldn't see before, the conditions of life, connected with the system. Let's do some things to impede the continuation of these things. I had a general consciousness that something was wrong before, general conditions of the working class (classe trabalhadora).

I began to see the relationship between the situation and the capitalist system, so planned. I began to study more, search for information, read, discuss things with people and look for various groups.

Note some of the communalities in Mercedes' experiences and those of Josê. She describes her independent questioning of the existing social and economic conditions and the extreme dissatisfaction she felt before becoming involved with a group of people with ideas for profound social change.

Breaking Away from Traditional Social Norms Which Constrain Women. In the next excerpt, Mercedes prefaces her discussion of her involvement with the chemical and pharmaceutical union groups with some comments on the social norms which she feels constrained her from political activity. These cultural norms are particularly relevant to the young single women such as Mercedes who are from the Northeast and often employed in the São Paulo factories.

Mercedes: Another personal thing was my disconnection from a series of things, I had been bound (amarrada) by certain habits and the family. I began to dislodge myself from the "normal life," rules about being in public, proper (certinha), and social rules, needing special friends. I began to feel that something was wrong, that these things were to preserve things as they were.

The conditions of my life had already demanded that I live away from my family, with friends, but it wasn't my choice, as an option. I had an existence very connected with my family, with certain friends and a limited social group. I began to feel that I needed to open up new connections with those who had a different consciousness. I had to procure a larger space, to understand new things.

At this point, it may be appropriate to describe some of the cultural traditions which exist in Brazil regarding family authority. One type of family structure found in Brazil is the patripotestal extended family which was inherited from Portugal and Spain during the colonial period (Willems 1975:56). In this tradition, an unmarried woman was under the authority of her father or her oldest brother. In marriage that authority was transferred to her husband and only widowhood allowed women some personal autonomy. This tradition has been applied in a less stringent form to the traditional middle classes and upper classes in Brazil today. For these classes, Willems (1953) has described a virginity complex which applies to the conduct of women and conversely a virility complex which applies to men. However, Willems (1953, 1975) has indicated that these complexes definitely do not apply to the lower class in Brazil. In fact, he states that in the rural communities in southern Brazil which he studied, "there seems to be no perceptible discrimination between sexually inexperienced women and those who have previously indulged in sexual intercourse (Willems 1953:344)." The requirements for chaperonage and segregation of sexes were far less elaborate among the working class than those found in the middle and upper classes. He found that in centers of heavy Portuguese immigration like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, some of the conservative patriarchal traditions were still in practice. Nevertheless even in the 1950s, Willems (1953:345) found that "there was a great deal of compromising and conflict" even among the middle and upper classes.

These vestiges of the patriarchal patterns of authority and notably the requirement that adult women be chaperoned in public still affected some of the women whom I interviewed in 1983 and 1984 in São Paulo. Mercedes has described above the general conservative nature of a social life circumscribed by her extended family. Later on other comments from women factory workers from the Northeast will refer to the authority which brothers can hold over their conduct. Rules about a woman being in public have to be confronted by young women in Brazil who wish to attend union meetings at night.

Political party differences in the labor movement, the PT and the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union. In the following passage, Mercedes makes reference to the difference between the previous union leadership and the current chemical and pharmaceutical union directorship. The directorship which was active at the time of the research was considered one of the three opposition union groups in the São Paulo area, the others being the well-known São Bernardo metalworkers and the São Paulo bankworkers' union. All three of these unions were generally considered to be affiliated with the Workers' Party. However, in the chemical and pharmaceutical union, some members were backed by the PT, others had no clear party affiliation (such as Carmen, whose narrative is presented above), and some had connections with other opposition groups outside the PT.

Mercedes: The work with the chemical union is the latest thing I have done. I do not have membership in one of the groups. I wanted to be within a movement which has to do with the worker and I chose the union and the PT, but I do not have an exact idea of a position, I am learning.

My curiosity drew me, I don't have much history in it. I began to work in commerce which is dead in terms of mobilization; it has no history of struggle. Class struggle, luta de classe doesn't exist there. There is no way to participate in the union there and when I entered into the chemical work, there was a great difference.

In a certain way, (the chemical union has) an identification with a group, a category of workers. I began to participate at the level possible. I had a full life, I studied and worked and not much time was left over for participation. There was not much space when the other slate of directors was in (before the current one of 1983). I was

procuring a way, others of the PT were, too. Then I moved in closer with the new slate and I began to participate more.

The project of creating an autonomous Central Union (C.U.T.) became one clearly associated with the PT during the study period and as such created clear divisions among the union directorship. After I left the field, the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union directorship expelled those associated with the Central Union project. Although during the period of elections the slate of union director candidates was thought to have been largely sympathetic to the PT political party agenda, once in office several key leaders revealed themselves to be directly opposed to some basic PT projects such as the formation of the C.U.T. It could also be noted here that the subsequent slate of directors included only two women—as opposed to the more representative number of six women for an industrial sector which employs more than 25 percent women.

The "contradictions of class:" disparaging differences in ways of life. The next response was elicited by this prompt from the interviewer: "You diverged from your previous mode of thinking, how did you do it?" Mercedes discussed the significance of controlled salaries (the wage decrees mentioned in Chapter 3). She points to her origins in the Northeast region of Brazil as having a fundamental connection with her understanding of what she refers to as the "contradictions of class."

Mercedes: This cost me dearly. When I began to understand things as related to a system, feeling something was wrong. When I understood: Why does a worker have a controlled salary that is miserable? He must subject himself to that salary, when in reality he cannot have a dignified life with it. All at the top, the cúpula (control tower), the bosses, a minority, the governor, etc. have a good life so distant from the worker below. There is a disparaging difference between their ways of life.

I read about this, I had a questioning of this situation. Maybe it was an instinct from my roots (in the Northeast), where you have a people who suffer so much (um povo muito sofrido). It is a region which has seen injustice. In São Paulo when you see in detail at every level

(nitidamente), in the industrial neighborhoods the differences of class, this shocks you and you must either question it or become alienated. I went in search of answers because of this; the contradictions of class compelled me. I tried to become connected with some work in a community. I have not decided whether the union is the best place to act, the right form for a struggle for a change. I continue to question if the union gives you a form for a fundamental change.

In the following portion of the interview, Mercedes describes the function of a working-class based political party as channelling the consciousness of a group of people. She found neighborhood associations limited in scope. I began this discussion by asking: "How is the party different from the union?"

Mercedes: I see a difference in the government structure. The union has an obligation to the government, but the party does not. It has a greater space. It channels the consciousness of a people (povo), but the union has limited space. The party must break through this barrier which the government imposes. Together with the people, it has the physical conditions to do this.

A sociedade de bairro? The neighborhood association? It is a vehicle you can take further. There exists a problem with them. Groups which are sometimes immature can become repetitive, directly concerned with demands (revindicações) and do not go for a larger responsibility which is a politicization or consciousness-raising (conscientização) of the people. What I felt with my participation was that it was restricted to demands specific to the locale, one problem, and a closed group.

This was an important part of my development. All specific problems are political but do not necessarily depart to a political liberation. Local problems were resolved but a collective solution was not found and other groups directly connected with their problems were not reached. The people involved had other problems, for example, not having a place to live, but the neighborhood group was concerned with bringing water in. They could not deal with the homeless. There were horrible conditions of life, with basic sanitation. Poorly constructed houses, a more basic problem, and the exploitation of rent were not touched with the group I worked with.

Immediate demands, long-range consciousness raising. Like Márcia,

Mercedes raises the issue of how immediate demands relate to long-range plans for
changes in political consciousness. Mercedes mentions one common practice
among neighborhood associations, "breaking the asphalt," deliberately destroying

roads into poor neighborhoods in protest of the lack of services. Such action forces city government to send out public work crews into the neighborhood to fix the public thoroughfare. The city government is then pressured to expand the work of the road crews to include pipeline installation or to provide other urban services.

Mercedes: For example, breaking the asphalt to bring in services, solves the immediate problem by getting the attention of the authorities. The fundamental problem, the structure of the thing, the time of existence, an age old problem and the mobilization of this population is to see that the services are not the only problem. The relative newness of the sociedades means that they can go further, but I was worried that it wouldn't broaden. It is risky to limit one's participation to only this. Spontaneous groups such as this, church groups can stay with isolated problems, only the concerns of that closed group.

Finally Mercedes discusses the emerging movement for an independent labor front uniting all workers. It is this movement which split the labor movement during the fieldwork period. The old vanguard more closely aligned with the Communist Party in the existing labor unions opposed the work of the PT for the establishment of the Central Union. The chemical and pharmaceutical union directorship was divided in its position, but the dominant members opposed this independent union movement.

Mercedes: My anxiety for changes is to generalize, what I desire is a general change, they expand to include other groups. For this reason I prefer the union and I still question their isolation, Why is the discrimination against this one category, doesn't it extend to others? For example, the government wage restriction (arocho salarial) affects all the workers (trabalhadores), that position of all the unions I question. The C.U.T is important and certain sectors of the party have no position. It is not totally supported and some do not take the work seriously. Some are opposed. How are the workers as a class promoted with this impasse over the C.U.T question?

The need for replacement of "segmented unions" by a central union.

Mercedes ends her interview by suggesting that the C.U.T. (Central Union) may be

the organization which can complement the political party, the PT, to further the causes of the working class.

Mercedes: All of this control from the government, as long as this exists, the struggle will not advance. Today in Brazil there is an impasse and the worker is unaware of this. Unfortunately, the working class (classe trabalhadora) has no other choice besides this segmented union.

I see for example, a possibility of organization through a CUT connected with a party. A party is not everything, it is a way for the class to identify itself. There has to be an organization which together with a party can function. [Emphasis mine] Let us see if the CUT can do this, I hope so, it is still ever new. It causes us (a gente) some desperation as it finds a way to organize. The union has to overcome its present structure maybe through the Central Union. This is my opinion.

Mercedes clearly indicates this comment as her final summation by saying:
"This is my opinion." This phrase is another of Tedlock's framing devices
(1983:288). Based on her experiences as an activist, Mercedes sees limitations with
the union and with a party. Perhaps the Central Union movement will overcome
these limitations. Like the Neighborhood Friends' Society members, she has seen
the Workers' Party as a way to identify a political group with which to work.

Mercedes, however, expresses a preference for continued union participation with
the C.U.T. project over neighborhood political participation.

# Political Participation For Women More Liberating Than Workplace Experience

When one compares the self-descriptions by Mercedes, Márcia, and Catarina to those of the two men, Josê and Luís, some differences emerge. The men were eager to relate the changes in their political consciousness to factory work or union organizing experiences. The women emphasized instead the changing phases of their lives-school, marriage, moving away from their family. Mercedes described her union involvement as part of her personal life trajectory and not as a final goal

in her political development. Her union involvement appears to be subordinate to her party affiliation.

The women present their political work as an experience which is more liberating than gaining economic independence. The observations and descriptions made by these working class women are very similar to those below from a document which was circulated in 1967 in Havana University:

Economic independence is not enough. It is not a matter of a woman being able to pay her way but... of being able to transform her attitude toward life... the problem will not be solved simply by the incorporation of the woman in work. Extracting her from the role of housewife will not automatically change her attitude toward life. A woman working for the collectivity can continue to view problems through the prism of subordination and passivity.... It is a process of personal realization, which does not lie merely in dedicating herself to a creative task but in shifting the centre of interest from the limits of one's emotional life and events within the nuclear family, to a much broader area... which goes beyond individual interest, the interest centred in social activity...

The true feminine struggle is the rejection of all those childhood teachings, all those family pressures during adolescence, and even the dominant social thinking which affects her as an adult . . . the idea of femininity, of womanhood, as meaning the dedication of one's life to finding and keeping a companion generally, at the price of being his satellite (Sutherland as quoted by Rowbotham 1972:233)

Especially the ideas which were presented by Mercedes are reminiscent of this earlier Cuban feminist declaration. Conversely, the ideas of the older community activist, Catarina, are not so feminist according to these standards. Nevertheless, all of these women as leaders in a realm which was formerly considered "for men only" are moving away from a traditional attitude that womanhood means being a satellite of someone else. Political activism for these working class women enables them to feel a sense of social participation which they do not appear to experience merely by working outside the home. Catarina worked as a seamstress and discussed socialism with her husband, but only her involvement in the creation of the Neighborhood Friends' Society brought her a sense of social

participation. Mercedes had both factory work and night classes, but still searched out a group of people with whom she could discuss the general conditions of the working class.

One special question which has been addressed by political organizers has been answered by these working class participants. That question was whether organizing should focus on the workplace or on the neighborhood. The answer is that it cannot be singularly attached to either location. The limits of focussing on the workplace can be seen in the union movement. The next part of the chapter describes how women are excluded in workplace organizing by the male-dominated union leadership.

Having presented the most "anthropological" part of the present chapter—the views of activists themselves—I will next describe how the sexual division of labor shapes the social groups of factory men and women. The rest of this chapter is a discussion of the differential impact of the sexual division of labor on women's political participation in the union and in neighborhood-based political activities.

The sexual division of labor in the factories as described below essentially segregates men and women in the workplace. Working class neighborhoods and especially favelas are considered "women's territory" (Sarti 1983) during most work days. The overall character of union demands is wage-related while the general character of neighborhood demands are health-related. Factory concerns are generally viewed as part of men's domain while neighborhood concerns are seen as within the domain of women.

#### The Sexual Division of Labor in the Factories

Several researchers have suggested that in Latin America the labor movement is male-dominated (Humphrey 1983; Navarro 1985; Leite 1982). There

are a variety of reasons for this dominance. In São Paulo, the main union opposition group centers on the metalworkers in the auto industry of São Bernardo, the majority of whom are male (Leite 1982; Humphrey 1983). But even in the chemical and pharmaceutical union where there are a significant number of women factory workers, the union still is dominated by male leaders who appear to respond more to the interests of men in the factories than to the women factory workers in this industrial sector.

The union structure in place in Brazil (as discussed in Chapter 2) divides workers into categories according to the product made. Accordingly, within the same factory there are various unions represented. Membership in these unions is mandatory by government regulation. In the present case study, even though all those who produce chemical or pharmaceutical products belong to the same union, there are two different base pay rates—one for those who work with chemicals and another for those who produce pharmaceuticals. As described earlier in Chapter 3, the division of labor by gender is such that pharmaceutical factories predominantly employ women and chemical factories have almost all male employees. The few men who are employed by the pharmaceutical factories are usually supervisors and do not work side by side with women.

Consider the typical arrangement in a pharmaceutical factory. The work is subdivided into sections of the factory, one for bottling, one for pill packaging, one for wrapping and crating, one for arranging crates for shipment and loading. Typically, there is a segregation of these sections by gender with women doing everything except loading and the arranging of materials for shipment. As Humphrey (1987) has shown in his study of women in industry in São Paulo, women very rarely work side by side with men.

There is supervision of the women in the sections where they work to prevent them from talking. Union bulletin cartoons illustrating the forms of oppression

endured by women in these factories show that even bathroom time is monitored by male supervisors (see Figure 4-1). Humphrey has also pointed out in numerous studies of women in Brazilian industry (1983:51;1987), that women are frequently subject to more rigid supervision than men on the job, not only in terms of control of their movement, but in the speed required on the assembly line. Women factory workers are constantly supervised.

The bathroom is a place to take a break, unwind a little, or smoke. The women's bathroom is a also a "special conference room for women only" and one of the women directors from the chemical and pharmaceutical union has said that she has done her best organizing in the women's bathroom sequestered from the bosses.



Figure 4-1. Women's Views of Bosses

The section of the cartoon shown in Figure 4-1 is entitled "Repression." In the first frame, the woman is headed to the bathroom (banheiro) and the boss reminds her to watch the time. In the second frame, the boss yells over her shoulder "Work more quickly!" In the final frame, he calls her a "jackass" and a "brick wall." (Sindihua bulletin, February, 1984)

The restriction of time allowed for women in the bathroom and the regulation of this privilege by <u>men</u> over women workers is "the clearest, most resented, and most uniform of all the restrictions placed on women workers" (Humphrey 1987:132). Leite (1982:82-83) also mentions women's acute resentment of the restriction of access to the bathroom. It is a source of continuous friction between management and workers.

In spite of the efforts of the supervisors, however, there is a lot of communication which continues in the women's work sections due to the nature of the work, particularly in the bottling section (see Figure 4-2). There women stand close together loading the small vials onto the conveyer. The repetitive hand motions require little visual attention and the noise of the machines is just enough to cover the sound of talking.

Men working in sections such as the shipment section are usually given little supervision and move about more freely giving them plenty of opportunities for discussion. However, these work arrangements do not allow communication between men and women because they usually stay in separate work sections. Employees are usually released for lunch or dinner breaks individually with the time being staggered to allow for turnover in restricted cafeteria space. People who work in different sections have limited contact with one another during lunch or dinner breaks. The time of release from the factory at the end of the day is also staggered slightly by work section.

Work sections can be clearly identified as people leave from the factory gates each day in separate social groups. There are gaps of a few minutes between the arrival and departure of each section in the "punch-out" booth. Informally I have observed not only a segregation by gender, but by race.

Each work section appears to have a noticeable homogeneity of skin color with the shades of brown almost the same within each section. The hierarchical



Figure 4-2. Scene from a Play on International Women's Day, March 9, 1984 (Photo: Bio Zenha)

In Figure 4-2, factory women illustrate some of the types of discussions which go on in the assembly line of a typical pharmaceutical factory in a play presented at the union hall. This play was presented for International Women's Day, March 8, 1984. The photo shows their pantomime of the repetitive motion of loading vials into a bottling machine, an activity which frees them to concentrate on their conversations.

nature of these divisions can be inferred by the order of departure for each work section. For lunch breaks and a the end of the work day, the first sections to leave are the "whitest" men, followed by the "whitest" women (office workers), then come the darker-skinned men and the last sections to leave are the darkest-skinned women. Other than visual first-hand validation of this observation, written documentation (using, for example, work cards) of this racial segregation would be difficult due to the complicated race designations used in different regions in Brazil.

The physical arrangements of work sections in the factories structure workrelated social groups so that even on breaks and in the hour of leaving work, women
usually talk only to other women and men with other men. This has a profound
impact on their political groupings since there is little opportunity for male union
organizers to become acquainted with women workers. Also there are few women
union organizers.

# The Male: Female Hierarchy in the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Workers' Union Directorship

The two women union organizers who were part of the chemical and pharmaceutical union directorship and who still worked in the factories, had access to the women workers but I assessed them as being lowest in the power hierarchy within that union directorship. They could convey information from the union to these workers, but were not very effective in getting the male directorship to listen to the concerns of their co-workers.

Wage negotiations carried out by the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union provide a good illustration of the hierarchy in the union leadership and the exclusion of women. Note in Figure 4-3 that factory women are absent from formal wage negotiations.



Figure 4-3. Men at the Bargaining Table (Photo: Bio Zenha)

Seated at the bargaining table are the all-male representatives of the chemical and pharmaceutical firms (shown at the top in the photo) and the all-male representatives from the union (shown at the bottom in the photo). The three people at the top left at the table are the union lawyers. That accounts for the only woman included at the bargaining table. Three of the six women union directors can be seen in the background taking notes.

# "The Unity of the Category" and the Recognition of Women Factory Workers' Lower Wages

Humphrey (1983:51-52) explains that women are not concentrated in the larger factories where the unions usually focus their attention. Greater attention was given to the larger factories by the chemical and pharmaceutical union directorship because there are more votes to re-elect the slate of directors in these large multinationals.

One woman union director reported to me that she was dismayed that she was being pressured to turn her attention away from the smaller factories where she knew more women were working. Gitahy, Hirata, Lobo and Moyses (1982) have validated this observation of the vote-getting motivation to overlook the factories where women are concentrated. In São Bernardo, these surveyors state that the first congress of women metalworkers was organized with a view toward attracting women to the union, not for the purpose of mobilizing women around their own situations.

There is another characteristic of the union which directly opposes the recognition of women's demands as factory workers. There is a distinctive union discourse on "the unity of the category" which insists that the category must be seen as homogeneous in its needs (Humphrey 1983:52). According to this line of thinking, the needs of all those who work in the chemical and pharmaceutical sector of industry must be expressed as a unified list of demands. This stress on unity and homogeneity thus discourages the recognition of women workers as having special needs (Navarro 1985).

In the case of the chemical and pharmaceutical union, this stress on "the unity of the category" means that the differences between work in chemical factories, predominantly done by men and at a higher base pay, and the work in

pharmaceutical factories, predominantly done by women and at a lower base pay, should not be mentioned. Were the women in pharmaceuticals to call attention to the fact that there are two different base pay levels present in one union category, and that the one which applies most often to women is the low one, they would be focusing attention on the non-homogeneity of the labor force represented by the one union. In other words, pharmaceutical workers should not compete against chemical workers demanding equal base pay rates. Instead both chemical and pharmaceutical workers are to stand united in their demands. Salary demands are expressed as percentage increases in salaries usually to adjust for raises in the cost of living; the two different base pay rates are accepted as they are. Women, then, cannot ask for equal pay with men because pharmaceutical factories are accepted by the union as having a lower base pay than chemical factories and it is the pharmaceutical factories which employ most of the women. Further, to recognize the health issues often raised by women which are connected with pregnancy would also threaten "the unity of the category."

## Union Activities Contrasted With Neighborhood-Based Political Activity

The union headquarters of the chemical and pharmaceutical workers of São Paulo was set up with recreational facilities which were exclusively for men; the main area for socializing was the bar and pool room. Humphrey (1983) also points out that this is the case with the metalworkers' union of São Bernardo. There was not a single room set up to accommodate women's preferred activities. This deficiency was alluded to in an amusing and ironic way by one young woman factory worker. She often went to the union headquarters to see if dances or other activities were being planned. She said that there was never anything to do if she needed to wait at the headquarters to see if a planning meeting was going to occur. On some

days, she said, she simply did not have *saco*. The term *saco* literally translated is a slang term for testicles, but the phrase is generally used in Brazilian Portuguese to mean patience. She could be quoted here, then, as saying that she "just didn't have the balls to stay at the union hall."

There were no meeting provisions made for child care by the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union. There was only one occasion when child care was provided during meetings at the headquarters -- a weekend training meeting set up by an inter-union coalition of women.

Male-centered recreational facilities are set up at the union headquarters and union meetings are often scheduled which conflict with women factory workers' domestic responsibilities in the evenings. These practices stand in contrast to the activities of the neighborhood association. Neighborhood association meetings are sometimes held in the homes of the women involved or in the neighborhood and child care is provided. If visits to the mayor are required, they are usually carried out by the housewives during work hours.

For young women from the Northeast (who seem to be preferred for factory work), union meetings requiring that they come out at night unaccompanied were improper. Some reported during the interviews that they were supervised by their brothers who had come with them to the city of São Paulo from the farm Their brothers would not allow them to attend such meetings. For that reason, women union directors sensitive to this issue held small meetings near the factories immediately after quitting time. The two women directors from rural areas preferred this meeting arrangement.

The sexual division of labor in this case favors women's inclusion in neighborhood association activities in contrast to the case of the labor union.

Women who work part-time (such as Catarina who works as a seamstress) or those who do not work outside the home use formal work hours to visit the mayor's office.

Because the demands of neighborhood associations are connected with protesting food prices, unsanitary conditions in the residential areas of the factory workers, the scarcity of emergency clinics, or the absence of public nurseries, their activities are generally associated with the sphere of women's responsibilities. Generally these types of neighborhood concerns fit into the broad category of health concerns which are socially designated as women's concerns.

# Wages Alongside Health Concerns for Factory Women in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Firms

Although their wages are terribly low, as the survey responses in Chapter 3 suggest, these women did not expect to receive equal pay for equal work. As shown in that chapter, women are relatively well paid in chemical and pharmaceutical factories. That is, compared to work in textile factories or domestic work, which were commonly reported as part of the work histories of these women, work with chemicals or pharmaceuticals was worth it.

The pharmaceutical factories are employing a large number of young single women and there appears to be a preference for workers from the Northeast region of Brazil. At a very young age, young women from the Northeast typically arrive in the São Paulo area sponsored by a middle or upper middle class family to be maids. This sponsorship is typically set up upon the recommendation of relatives in the Northeast to bring a daughter from a recommended family to live in São Paulo. An agreement is made between a middle or upper class family in São Paulo with a poorer family in the Northeast. The daughter must work for her sponsoring family for five to seven years to establish sufficient length of residence in the city and get a work card similar to a "Green Card." During that time, she is given room and board and in many cases these young women receive no wages. Some of the women

interviewed from the chemical and pharmaceutical factories had worked as domestics and their current work situation was a vast improvement over the previous arrangement.

The interview responses presented in Chapter 3 suggest that the women in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries view their wages as satisfactory. Many of those interviewed reported that they had previously worked as domestics or in textiles and that their earlier earnings were not enough to support them. Compared to the wages which women earn in domestic work and in textiles, women in pharmaceutical factories earn good wages. More importantly, these women indicate that their households cannot survive without their wages. "Their survival takes precedence over their rights." They generally chose not to risk losing their jobs to protest government wage laws, to go on strike against extended over-time followed by factory layoffs, or to protest discriminatory wages in their firms.

# Resistance to Women's Health Concerns Among Union Leaders and Male Factory. Workers

The union leadership, even in the most active unions, continues to stress strictly economic demands rather than protesting health conditions. This traditional union stance is particularly inappropriate for chemical and pharmaceutical workers who are being exposed in Brazilian industry to many toxic materials. Although health concerns were found to frequently dominate women workers' discussions in small group meetings, these concerns never seemed to make it to the union hall.

Some of the health concerns of the women in pharmaceutical factories differ from the concerns of the male-dominated union. The case of Flora, a union director who worked at Lafi, is illustrative of the lack of responsiveness of the union to women's health issues. Lafi is a multinational which produces birth control pills and other pharmaceutical products which represent a special risk for pregnant women.

Pregnant women are rotated out of the work sections which require a sterile environment because the sterile conditions destroy the body's immune systems and can lead to miscarriages. However, there is a two to three week period during which a woman may not know she is pregnant and may remain in the sterile work section. One of the greatest fears expressed by Flora during the research period was that her child would be born deformed or handicapped or that she would have a miscarriage.

Flora, a young and active woman, reported that she was sick and had to stay home several times during this pregnancy. In contrast, she was able to work right up to the day that she gave birth to her last child, standing up all day on the assembly line while in labor, completing her shift and going home to give birth to the baby. She talked with many other young women at Lafi who shared her fears of the dangers of these pharmaceutical products for women workers bearing children. Many reported miscarriages. Although she discussed these health concerns often with her women work colleagues and with other union directors including her husband, this concern was never addressed by the chemical and pharmaceutical workers' union of São Paulo.

During a special weekend training session for chemical and pharmaceutical workers conducted at the union headquarters, men and women workers were asked to choose different problems with their employers and to show how they could organize some kind of action demanding change. Some of the health problems chosen were a lack of gloves and other protective clothing for the men who move drums full of toxic chemicals, poor ventilation in rooms where irritant vapors are present, and suspected use of benzene (a lethal poison still used as a chemical solvent in Brazil). Both men and women reported effects of handling birth control pills and antibiotics in powder form ingested under the fingernails.

During my fieldwork, I observed many of the effects on both men and women in chemical and pharmaceutical factories as they were continuously exposed to chemical irritants. The effects included slight burns on all exposed skin surfaces and hair loss. Workers also reported lung problems.

During discussions at the union training sessions, there was a gender difference in the reactions of workers to these problems. In general, the men said that the work was hard and that one simply had to endure hardships bravely. They pointed out that they usually received extra pay for hazardous work especially in the paint factories to compensate for these physical hardships. (Men, however, would immediately request transfers or quit the factory when the estrogen ingestion from birth control pill production caused breast growth or other physical changes.)

Women, on the other hand, did not accept the need to endure these health hazards and in the training sessions organized ways to challenge the employers regarding these risks. One coping mechanism reported by the women to avoid toxic build-ups in their systems was to change sections often and work with different products.

An overview of the union bulletins during the research period suggests that sometimes health concerns were given attention. One factory went on strike due to the extremely unsanitary condition of bathrooms in which workers had to wade through waste (Sindiluta, November 30, 1983). Concerns over the quality and quantity of food served in the factory cafeterias resulted in frequent protests as reported in the union bulletins (Cf. Sindiluta, March 28, 1984). Like the rural agricultural workers studied by Stolcke (1988), basically the only health requirement which these workers consider as their right is adequate food. For many of them, the food provided by the factory is basic to their continuing health and fitness to continue working since their salaries do not cover even the basic food ration. Some women workers described to me giving extra rice portions to some of their poorer co-workers to take home to eat.

Actions through the health regulatory commissions were very limited. Each factory also had a special elected health committee (CIPA) comprised of workers,

but they were in most cases employees promoted by the owners who would not protest any of the poor health conditions. Many small union meetings were held to begin to promote activists as CIPA members in Lafi and other chemical and pharmaceutical factories (*Sindiluta*, May 29, 1984).

#### Conclusions

Just as workers are generally segregated from management in the physical arrangement of work sections in the factories, so are working class neighborhoods segregated from other kinds of neighborhoods. Manuel Castells (1977) has shown the historical political significance of this physical separation of the classes in urban living arrangements in his studies of large French cities. *Favelas* are generally located in highly industrialized and polluted regions on the periphery of São Paulo near slightly upgraded living areas also inhabited by factory workers. These neighborhood arrangements have given rise to a collective identity for these working class residents. They associate with and create political action with their neighbors. Working class-only neighborhoods have been demonstrated to be important in urban social movements in France, Spain and the U.S. (Castells 1977, 1978, 1983).

The sexual division of labor has profoundly affected the political participation of working class women. Factory work in this case study is fundamentally segregated by gender, as Humphrey (1980,1983, 1987) has also documented in several other case studies. The daily lives of factory women are different from those of men who work in the same factories. Factory women do not work side by side with factory men or belong to the same social groups. The social group identities which can be inferred from the interview data explored in this chapter derive from these segregated social realities.

Schmink (1981) has indicated that working class women in Brazil in the 1980s have become mobilized around consumption demands based on residential groupings. Although women take the lead in neighborhood organizations, she found that women factory workers rarely took leadership roles in the union. Her findings are validated in this case study of chemical and pharmaceutical workers and the Diadema neighborhood organization.

Women factory workers are generally excluded from the official male union leadership and alienated from union halls which are obviously not designed for women. They sometimes form their own groups to bring their demands to factory managers. However, in general, factory women endure wage inequalities as well as health risks in these factories for their households to survive. Some of the information concerning political organization by women within the union movement in São Paulo since 1985 (see Chapter 2) suggests that women continue to struggle to win a place in the union movement (Lobo et al. 1989).

The impact of the "political" sexual division of labor in the union movement and in neighborhood-based social movements can be seen in the perceptions of the working class women interviewed. Likewise the women's perceptions reflect the physical separation of the working class in the city of São Paulo. The women I interviewed see themselves as subordinate members of a subordinate group (the working class). Favelados are politically represented by women who live in favelas at least at the level of the local commissions. The composition of the Workers' Party is such that middle class men who are "leftist intellectuals" are still prevalent in the central committee. Some of the women reported some disdain expressed by these men from the PT when it came to actually having favelados present en masse at party functions. However, in the grassroots base of the PT women still predominate. It is the women who are the people who have to live with the unhealthy conditions of favelas all day. It is the women in the favelas who must cope

with water problems and the lack of emergency clinics for their children while their husbands, if they have them, are away at work in factories which are usually far away from these working class dormitory communities. Far from being politically docile, working class women appear to be actively adding their economic and social demands to the new Brazilian political agenda.

#### CHAPTER 5 NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT BRAZILIAN FACTORY WOMEN, THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR AND WORKING CLASS POLITICS

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I reviewed some feminist and Marxist theoretical approaches to the political mobilization of women and some historical studies of factory women and social movements. I gave particular emphasis to studies of Brazilian factory women and Brazilian social movements. Several studies of the Latin American labor force have suggested that there is a sexual division of labor not only at the household level, and that gender hierarchies also exist in the paid labor force (Beneria and Roldán 1986, Humphrey 1987, Safa 1980, Saffioti 1980, Barrett 1988). In many cases in Latin America and the rest of the Third World, women are generally confined to low wage, unskilled and unstable production jobs and better paying management positions appear to be reserved for men (Beneria and Roldán 1986, Humphrey 1987, Acker 1988, Deere and Leal 1985, Gitahy et al. 1982, Leite 1982, Lobo et al. 1989, Phillips and Taylor 1980).

A review of Brazilian political history indicates that social movements and the labor union movement in Brazil in the 1980s cannot be fully understood without examining the repressive political measures which were used to control social movements and especially the labor movement during the period from 1964 through 1978. During that period, many working class-based political groups were exterminated, imprisoned or sent into foreign exile by the military regime. Some fear and reticence remained among the general group of people I interviewed during the fieldwork period of 1983 and 1984.

Certainly the interview presented in Chapter 4 about the July, 1983, general strike shows that such fears were justified. Both federal and state police were called into action by the governor of the state of São Paulo (Montoro) to control the population participating in the general strike. Tear gas was used in the public streets on several occasions to disperse crowds during July and October, 1983. Incidentally, Montoro (from the opposition party, PMDB) lost in his subsequent bid for re-election.

Current union structure continues to be largely confined by the corporativist union structure installed by Vargas in the 1930s. During the time of my fieldwork, many political organizers suspected of working to establish the first national labor confederation, the C.U.T., were chased down in the streets and beaten or detained by the police. President Figueiredo declared in 1983 in a major São Paulo newspaper, the Folha de São Paulo, that he would "use any means necessary to end any political activities connected with the C.U.T. (labor confederation)." No labor union organizations which united workers from more than one city or more than one industrial sector were allowed legal status until 1986. At that time, two labor confederations gained official legal recognition: The C.U.T. and the C.G.T.

The labor movement began to be renovated in 1978 and 1979. A new kind of strike occurred during these years. Labor organizers circumvented the anti-strike laws by instructing workers who wished to protest management policies to remain at their work stations, but not to work (to simply maintain braços cruzados--arms folded). The legal definition of a strike at that time in Brazil appeared only to prohibit employees from refusing to enter a factory at the designated work hours. Also instead of maintaining a work stoppage for an indefinite period of time, "popcorn strikes" and "turtle operations" were organized in which workers stopped briefly and then re-started their production work. These activities were particularly

irritating to industrial managers because production could be slowed down for weeks, if the workers chose to adopt this strategy.

In 1982 a new political party, the Worker's Party, was formed from within the labor movement (Keck 1986). There appears to be a grassroots inclusion of women in this new political party. The recent expansiveness of political organizations such as unions and formal political parties in Brazil to include factory women and other working class women appears to relate to the prevalence of women in informal political organizations. Working class women predominated in neighborhood-based social and political organizations such as CEBs and Neighborhood Friends' Societies and in the cost of living movement in Brazil in the 1970s, but their inclusion in formal politics has been more recent. Women are still not well-represented in the party hierarchy even in the PT.

#### Findings from Phase 1

One phase of this dissertation project has focused on a specific Brazilian manufacturing sector which employs a large number of women, the chemical and pharmaceutical firms of São Paulo. According to the analysis presented in Chapters 3 and 4, not only are there significant wage inequalities between the sexes, but there are also gender differences in political action. A sexual division of labor existed in the organization of factory work as well as in the organization of political work in the labor union which I studied.

Humphrey (1987) and Stolcke (1988) have said that wage discrimination against women extends women's subordinate postion within the home into society and into the work situation. My analysis suggests that women's subordinate social position and economic subordination in the workplace also extends into the political sphere.

The analysis which I presented in Chapter 4 indicates that the collective work experiences of factory women differ from those of factory men and the various political strategies which these factory women develop are also different. I will refer to this specific aspect of the heterogeneity of working class experiences as "gendered class experiences."

My economic analyses confirmed three primary obstacles to women's economic autonomy and to their development of class consciousness as workers:

1) the segregation of women into the most poorly paid jobs; 2) the burden of the "double day;" and 3) the ideology that women are secondary wage earners. In both multinationals and in nationally owned factories producing chemicals and pharmaceuticals, women earned on the average 60% to 65% of men's salaries.

Women are mainly employed in pharmaceutical firms where the average pay of both men and women is lower compared to the pay in chemical companies in São Paulo. Neither women's nor men's salaries can individually cover the costs of feeding the average family of four. According to both married and single women interviewed, factory work did give them more autonomy than they had before. Married women claimed that factory work was a respite from staying at home. Single women not only referred to the economic benefits, but also claimed that they were enjoying the freedom to be out in public more. Factory work was helping them to escape from the traditional social constraints which confine women to the home.

Theoretical consideration of class oppositions alone does not explain the economic situations of factory women in chemical and pharmaceuticals. In this case study, working class women were found to be struggling against men as well as against capital in order to achieve better salaries and in order to promote other political demands in formal political institutions such as the opposition political parties and the union. My analysis supports Humphrey's (1987) suggestion that especially in the multinational firms which produce chemicals and pharmaceuticals,

women can expect little upward mobility in their jobs. Brazilian men might expect relatively more upward mobility than women, but many upper management positions appear to be reserved for foreign professionals or for the relatively few Brazilian men who have achieved university degrees.

This industrial sector as a whole is dominated by foreign investment and prone to massive layoffs. After comparing the pay levels of men and women working in nationally owned factories in chemicals and pharmaceuticals with those in multinationals, women appear to be less discriminated against by the multinationals in this sector of production in São Paulo. However, women can expect less job stability than men in the multinationals (DIEESE 1983, 1984b).

In spite of the observed wage discrimination against women, factory women's wages were so vital to their working class households that these women chose to accept unequal pay. It is significant to note that 36.8% of the women surveyed were supplying more than half of the total family income. Nevertheless, both men and women factory workers suggested in the interviews that women are seen as secondary wage earners regardless of the amount of financial contribution which they may be making to the family or household income. Despite the economic importance of their salaries, factory women's primary responsibilities were seen as bearing and raising children.

Brazilian factory women said that there were several barriers to their participation in the union movement: their primary responsibility for bearing and raising children; the social devaluation of women's work within the factory; the opinion that men and not women are good managers or supervisors and the prevailing cultural ascription of political leadership roles to men rather than women in Brazil.

These obstacles do not apply equally to women's participation in social movements. Women can take their children with them when they attend

neighborhood meetings (often held in one of the women's homes). Whereas women's factory work is socially devalued, the opposite is true for women's participation in community activities. In community-based political activity, women are seen as defending family interests and the family is women's traditional domain. Finally, the women who are active as community leaders in organizations such as the *favela* commissions do not compete with men for the political leadership roles within political party structures.

## Findings from Phase 2

The second phase of my research centered around the intensive study of one neighborhood association in Diadema so that I could compare community-based political activism with union activism. Interview material from special interviews with both union and community political activists combined with my own participant-observation yielding some interesting conclusions related to the political participation of these working class Brazilian women. In spite of considerable police intervention in response to union activities, women remained firmly committed to political activism.

There is relatively greater participation by working class women in the community-based organizations and social movements than in union politics. Even the opposition union chosen for this study generally delegated women leaders to subordinate roles within that individual union as well as within the larger organizational framework being developed to establish the new labor confederation (C.U.T.).

Male union leaders' resistance to what are considered "women's issues" were manifest in the area of factory health concerns. Workers in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, both men and women, are often exposed to severe health risks

such as toxic chemicals, poor ventilation in rooms where irritant vapors are present, and ingestion through exposed skin of antibiotics or abnormal amounts of estrogen in birth control pills which they process. I observed different responses to these health risks related to gender. Women did not accept the need to endure health hazards in their work environment as readily as men did. The men reported that the hazardous work pay which they received was sufficient compensation for enduring these work hardhips.

The political invisibility of working class women in Brazil. Throughout the 1980s, organized labor remained active, protesting the various austerity measures proposed by Brazilian presidents Figueiredo, Sarney and Collor. We can infer from the industrial or public sector named in strike summaries that women made up the majority of the "strikers" in some cases in Brazil during the 1980s. For example, public school teachers have been actively striking in response to several wage cuts aimed at the public sector. However, very little was said about women in the major media publications which I reviewed, particularly working class women. I attribute the invisibility of women in these publications mainly to the general exclusion of women from formal political institutions. Published material which highlights the activities of union leaders usually does not include information about the rank-and-file participants in large strikes.

The political contribution of the Brazilian women's movement. Some recent important changes in the general political environment in Brazil are directly related to the Brazilian women's movement. Most notably, the women's movement contributed to the overall revitalization of Brazilian social movements by winning political amnesty from the military government in 1978 for many political prisoners and exiles. A new council related to the Ministry of Labor was established in 1986 to address specifically women's issues: the National Council for Women's Rights.

Further institutional recognition of women as workers was achieved in the new constitution. A new Brazilian constitution was written in 1988 which included a revised labor code and granted many new rights to industrial and public workers. One change regarding women in the paid labor force was that maternity leave was extended to 120 days of paid leave. New fathers also gained a paid "paternal leave" of eight days. This establishment of paternal leave was unprecedented and can be seen as more progressive than the U.S. labor code.

## Conclusions: Women's Social Constructions of Their Work and Political Roles

The most "anthropological contribution" made by this dissertation project was presented in Chapter 4. Sociolinguistic analysis of my special interviews with activists has suggested that these women perceive themselves as subordinate members within a subordinate class. However, this perceived subordination in no way implies political docility. The way that the various women spoke of themselves and described their own political activities suggested that they often constructed a primary social identity which related to their place of residence rather than to the workplace. Both factories and neighborhoods have an essential segregation by gender. Most favelas and other working class neighborhoods are predominantly occupied by women during the largest part of the day. The men are gone, usually at work in a factory which is far away from the working class "dormitory communities."

In this case study, factory work was observed to be fundamentally segregated by gender with women occupying the worst jobs (see also Humphrey 1980, 1983, 1987). Factory women did not work side by side with factory men. Generally women would be concentrated in the packaging section of a factory, for example, while men would be concentrated in the shipping section. This gender segregation strongly influence these women's constructions of their social and political identities.

Based on these segregated work environments and on segregated "working class only" residential settings, women formed predominantly same sex social group identities. They expressed a perception of themselves as a subordinated group within work hierarchies, in the labor union hierarchy, or within the working class residential group. For example, one woman who organized a favela commission (whose interview is presented in Chapter 4) said that women favela dwellers had to deal with more menial or "dirty" problems than the men did. Men could leave the favela behind during the day when they went away to work, but there was no escape for women from the favela. The only hope for respite for the women was to change the conditions of the favela.

Because the demands of neighborhood associations are connected with household consumer needs, unsanitary living conditions, the scarcity of emergency clinics or the absence of public nurseries, their political activities are generally considered as the political domain of women. My interview data show that these women manifested a considerable degree of class consciousness, but little feminist consciousness. That is, they made their political demands on behalf of their families rather than challenging the traditional concept that "woman's place is in the home."

Beyond the inferences which I have made regarding social groups, I have also noted some political antagonisms which have been expressed by the activists who were interviewed. They clearly pointed out a direct political opposition between "the system" and people of the working class. Carmen also describes the separation between "ordinary" working class activists and the opposition union leadership. She also viewed "peons from the factory" including herself as distinct from the political groups within the recognized political opposition parties (PMDB and PT) which were compoased of middle class men and women. Some of these antagonisms related to the "mixed class" nature of major social movements and political parties active in Brazil. Both working class and middle class individuals comprised the

union movement and the coalitions incorporated into the "opposition parties," the PMDB and the PT (Keck 1986, Alves 1989).

Neighborhood organizing appears to be more the domain of working class women than does the union. The social experience of organizing themselves to make political demands on behalf of their own residential neighborhoods appears to establish a more enduring collective bond for both men and women who are active in these social movements. After a strike, everyone goes home from the factory, but recurrent protests, demonstrations, or organizing meetings held in one's home neighborhood establish a "collective" feeling which continues from day to day.

Women's domestic responsibilities can more easily be maintained when they participate in neighborhood groups than in the unions which typically conduct meetings far from the factory women's places of residence. However, a few women manage to cope with the demands of the "double day" and of union leadership. Although it appears to be easier for women to participate in community-based political groups than in a union or a party, I found these women to be actively challenging traditional ideas regarding "women's place" in all of these maledominated political institutions. Factory women are persistently pressuring for recognition of their unique demands. Neighborhood associations appear to act as "political springboards" in some cases to a broader participation by working class women in more formal political institutions such as the unions or political parties. Brazilian working class women are forging new social identities as political leaders through neighborhood associations and CEBs and even in the unions.

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# APPENDIX OUESTIONNAIRES USED FOR SURVEY INTERVIEWS

#### Preliminary English Version

- 1. How long have you worked in this firm? In what sector? (packaging, office, etc.)
- Where you work do you come in contact with toxic substances, antibiotics or birth control pills? Have you experienced any health problems related to these products?
- 3. Have you worked in other factories? Please specify. What was your specific job?
- 4. In your opinion, do you think your previous work situation was better? Why or why
- In your opinion, are you earning a good, bad, or reasonable income? How much do you earn?
- 6. What would be your ideal occupation?
- 7. How many people in your household gain a salary? How many people in your house do not earn an income?
- 8. Do you contribute your salary to maintain the household? What specifically are your financial responsibilities?
- 9. What is the total family income per month in your household?
- 10. Besides your factory work, do you do anything else to earn money? Please specify.
- 11. How many hours per day do you work? Inside and outside the home? (The latter question for women)
- 12. In your opinion, is it good for women to work outside the home? Why or why not?
- 13. Where do you live? How long does it take to get to the factory? What type of transportation do you use?
- 14. Is your neighborhood a working class residential area?
- 15. Do you participate in any organizations in your neighborhood?
- 16. How long have you been a member of the labor union?

- 17. Why did you join the union?
- 18. How long has it ben since you were last here in the union headquarters? What were you doing here at that time?
- Do you know anyone from the union? Please specify.
- 20. What are the most serious problems which you are confronting at this time?
- 21. In your opinion, should there be any changes in the union? Specify.
- 22. How do you see the current situation in industry? And Brazil's future?
- 23. How do you see the current situation for industrial workers?
- 24. Where were you born? Have you lived in other states?
- 25. Do you intend to stay in the city of São Paulo?
- 26. Age, marital status (single, married, divorced, living together).
- 27. How many years of schooling did you complete?

## First Portuguese Version

## Questionário: São Paulo 1983

Fábrica	
Função	

- Quanto tempo você está na fábrica? Trabalhou em outras?
- 2. Fez outro tipo de trabalho? Tinha uma vida melhor? (comida, casa)
- Onde você mora? Gasta quanto tempo para chegar na fábrica?
- Outras operárias moram em seu bairro?
- 5. Você participa em organizações no bairro? Quais?
- 6. Que idade você tem? Tem filhos? E casada, solteira?
- 7. Completou quantos anos de escola?
- 8. Se você parou de trabalhar, sua família teria dinheiro suficiente para sobreviver?
- Você acha que é bom para mulher trabalhar para ganhar dinheiro?
- 10. Quantos horas você trabalha por día (fora e dentro de casa)?
- 11. Você está ganhando bem? mal? Ganha quanto?
- 12. Cinco anos atraz, estava ganhando mais? Dez anos atraz?
- Você ganha um salário, outras pessoas em casa também? Quem? Quanto dá todos mensal?
- 14. Como divide o seu dinheiro e o do marido (ou outras em casa)?
- 15. Fora da fábrica, faz outro servico? Ganha quanto?
- 16. Quanto tempo você está sindicalizada? (Veja carteira)
- 17. Porque você se sindicalizou?
- 18. Quando foi a última vez você esteve na sede? Fez o que?
- 19. Ouem você conhece no sindicato? Ena sua sede?
- 20. Na sua opinião, precisa mudar alguma coisa no sindicato? Que deve fazer?

## Second Portuguese Version

Questionário: São Paulo 1984

Non	ne da sua fábrica
Sua	função
Bair	ro de residência
1.	Qual idade você tem? No. de anos
2.	Sexo: Masculino Feminino
	Estado civil:
	Casado(a)
	Solteiro(a)
	Divorciado(a)
	União livre
	Viúvo(a)
3.	Número de filhos menores em casa
	No. de filhos adultos
	Você deixa seus filhos onde enquanto está trabalhando?
	(Marca com X)
	Numa creche
	Em casa com uma pessoa
	Quem?Parente
	Outra
	Em casa de outra pessoa

	Tem outro arranjamento para cuida	ur dos filhos? Explique.
4.	Completou quantos anos de escola	? (Marca com X)
	Menos de 1 ano Primário Até que ano	_
	Secundário Até que ano	-
	Curso técnico Tipo	_
	Universidade No. de anos	_
5.	Quanto tempo você está nesta fábr	ica? No. de anos
	Em que setores?	
	Setor	Tempo
	Setor	_ Tempo
	Setor	_ Tempo
6.	Você trabalha com antibióticos? _	Sim Não
	Tem ou tinha qualquer problema c	com sua saude por causa disso?
	Explique.	
	Durante seu tempo na fábrica, per	deu nenê? Sim Não
	Quantas vezes?	

7.	Trabalhou em quais outras empresas?
8.	Como que são as condições de trabalho na sua empresa?
	Tem comissão de empregados na sua fábrica? Sim Não
	Quais são as atividades dela?
	Na sua empresa tem caixa de sugestões? Sim Não
	Quais são as datas de festa na sua fábrica?
9.	Você está ganhando bem? Mal? Ganha quanto?
	Você ganha um salário, outras pessoas em casa também?
	Quanto dá todos mensal?
10.	Onde você nasceu? Nome do estado
	Cidade ou campo?
	Quanto tempo você está em São Paulo? No. de anos
11.	Participa em organizações no seu bairro? Sim Não
	Quais?
12.	Deve mudaralguma coisa para melhorar o seu trabalho? Explique.
13.	Fora da fábrica, faz outro servico? Ganha quanto?

#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elizabeth Higgs was born in Evansville, Indiana, the second of two daughters. She grew up in western Kentucky in a small farming community which had a population of about 500. Her father, Emmett, worked as a welder in a nearby brewery and her mother, Frieda, worked as a full-time housewife and then as a nurse. Elizabeth completed a B. A. in psychology at Harding University in 1974. In 1976, she received a Master of Education degree in educational psychology from Mississippi State University. Following her fieldwork in São Paulo, Brazil, Elizabeth was awarded a Master of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Georgia in 1979. She completed her doctoral research during 1983 and 1984 in São Paulo as a Fulbright Fellow from the University of Florida in Gainesville.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Maxine L. Margolis, Chairperson Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and mality, as a dissertation for the degree of Dpctor of Philosophy.

Helen I. Safa
Professor of Anthropology

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Marianne Schmink Associate Professor of Anthropology

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Linda Wolfe

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Terry McCoy Professor of Sociology

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 1990

Dean, Graduate School